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Editor's Page

THIS ISSUE marks the fiftieth anniversary of our magazine. We plan a number of events in the coming year to celebrate, even if the political environment is uncongenial to elation. It prompts dissent instead. Our main event remains the ideas and arguments in our pages. We write for our times, against them, imagining better ones—insisting on the values of political democracy and social equality, on liberty with solidarity. Our anniversary issue engages the present, but also provides a little perspective on *Dissent's* values and history. ■ If you want to know why *Dissent* is “left-wing,” look at what the most right-wing administration in recent memory calls its “compassionate conservatism”: taxes cut to the benefit of those who can most afford them; Medicare reformed and an energy bill designed to the advantage of corporations and Mr. Bush’s political fortunes; disregard of civil liberties; determined chipping at the wall separating religion and state. ■ Every criticism of this administration is not “Bush-bashing.” Yes, some attacks on Mr. Bush are puerile. They resemble nothing so much as conservative vilification of Bill Clinton in the 1990s. The trouble with the Bush presidency is political not personal; policies, not syntax, are the problem. This president, who came into office after losing the popular vote, is a domestic unilateralist in war time. That should worry everyone, not least because his election campaign and right-wing pundits seek to make disagreement indistinguishable from sedition. ■ Some Republican congressmen recently proposed replacing Franklin D. Roosevelt’s likeness on the dime with Ronald Reagan’s. It is a cheap shot, but only on the surface. Look below. The Bush presidency is the unrepressed id of Reaganism. Unlike in the 1980s, there is no Democratic Party majority in Congress to be a restraining reality principle. And the Republicans certainly have no democratic superego. Think of Clinton’s impeachment, the Florida vote in 2000, the Texas reapportionment, the California recall. Connect the dots, and read Sean Wilentz’s indictment of the GOP’s “will to power” in this issue. ■ What has the president done to persuade foes of the Iraq War—or, indeed, to enable a supporter of it like me—to give his administration a benefit of the doubt? Because it is rhetorical, this question is very, very scary. Were I Iraqi I’d fret a lot that my country’s needs may be sacrificed to American electoral politics. What could be worse for America’s role in the world or for the image of democracy? Several authors in this issue address today’s unsettling international scene. Jeff Faux writes elegantly on behalf of social democratic values in global economics. Paul Berman argues artfully about the left and the war. Michael Walzer and his critics dispute vigorously the meaning of American empire. ■ As *Dissent's* founders might have said in 1954, this is just the beginning.

—MC

Winter 2004

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DISSENT

Decades of Dissent

Mitchell Cohen

LITTLE POLITICAL magazines try to traffic in big, often unorthodox ideas—the sort of ideas that don’t always enjoy mainstream circulation. *Dissent* has been making this effort since 1954. Its founders came out of the left, and they considered the mood back then to be both smug and wanting. “Ikeism,” wrote editor Irving Howe in *Dissent*’s third issue, referring to President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s nickname, was really the longing for an “era BC—Before Complexity,” a time when all questions were simple and answers easy. *Dissent*’s initiators, which included sociologist Lewis Coser, a refugee from Hitler’s Europe, and Meyer Schapiro, the eminent art critic, didn’t imagine that their journal would change the world. (“When intellectuals cannot do anything else,” Howe would quip, “they start a magazine.”) But they did hope to make intellectual life just a bit more complicated for both the right and the left in an era A.D.—after *Dissent*’s birth—by provoking debates about political ideas and about American and global issues. They believed in the value of disagreement, especially in a society that celebrated consensus. The same hope and belief animate its editors and writers today.

Wending through articles from the past fifty years, you will encounter arguments about the nature of capitalism, socialism, and democracy and on the impact of the cold war, McCarthyism, and mass culture. You will find appraisals of liberal and conservative politics along with anger at the malevolence of American racism and dismay over the disaster of Vietnam. You will come upon descriptions of political movements and political moments, together with reflections on culture and counter-cultures, feminism, pluralism, and the meaning(s) of so-

cial inequality. You will find authors thinking about the end of communism, the growth of globalization, and the vicissitudes of America’s superpower status. Fifty years cover a lot of politics, a lot of contention, a lot of ideas.

Some readers may find it odd that *Dissent* still calls itself a journal of “left” ideas and “left” opinion. The word “left” is hardly in vogue these days. It is even less popular than “liberal,” and it wasn’t fashionable when *Dissent* first appeared. American conservatives have sought for decades to stigmatize everything “liberal” or “left,” and have had considerable public success in doing so. Their effort has been made easier by the historical fact that the United States—in contrast to much of Western Europe—never had a mass socialist party that distinguished itself sharply from both undemocratic communists and anti-egalitarian conservatives. When you say the word “left,” American conservatives conjure up images of mass-murdering Stalinists with totalitarian aspirations, of imploding nationalized economies, of strutting third world dictators shouting “liberation” while shooting their critics, and of hectoring, self-important postmodern academics who can justify almost anything on behalf of Otherness. The composite is not appealing.

But this picture is airbrushed (perhaps today we should say, “digitally remastered”). Not that those Stalinists, those failed economies, those swaggering, often whiskered tyrants, and those too-clever theorists are imaginary. I wish they were. Still, consider how everything becomes more complex when we think about who is missing from the canvas, and what is not there. Let’s include some of the missing left and some of the missing right in order to get a somewhat larger sense of modern politics.

Start with all the missing socialists, including Marxists, who were communism’s first foes, and often its first victims. (Some historians remember them, but who else?). Then sketch in

Neville Chamberlain, the Conservative British prime minister who made “peace in our time” with Adolf Hitler. Add in social democratic and labor movements, which championed universal suffrage and basic democratic rights in nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Europe, while conservatives insisted that political equality violated the “natural order of things”—an order in which everyone, naturally, belonged in a proper place. Opponents of the civil rights movement used some like-minded notions not long ago in the United States, as do contemporary foes of feminism.

Now include in our picture the leftists and trade unionists who argued that democracy ought to be economic as well as political, and who pointed out that considerable discrepancies of wealth translate into imbalances of political power and political voice, subverting the promise of common citizenship. Depict the advocates of social citizenship; that is, people committed to the idea that all of us, as members of a common polity, ought to enjoy a range of basic social goods, such as a decent education, for example. (Without it, how can anyone be an effective, democratic citizen?). Or decent health care. (Should sick people be treated according to their illnesses or according to their status in labor markets? as British philosopher L.T. Hobhouse once queried.) Or decent working conditions and decent pensions. Don’t leave off the canvas the foes of such ideas, like American conservatives who reviled Social Security and Medicare as slides down the slippery slope from “individualism” to totalitarianism.

Then draw in some of the people who today question the role of unmerited advantages in our society derived from social class, race, or gender. These are people who think that it is not true that “those who have, deserve” or that social suffering (like hunger) is always the fault of those in distress. And they don’t have a mystical belief in the all-curing powers of The Market reminiscent of the old communist faith in The State.

Somewhere, maybe in a corner of our widening canvas, we can sketch a twenty-year-old American in uniform. This soldier wonders aloud, “Why can my life be risked abroad on behalf of patriotism, while prosperous patriots at home holler against paying a fair share of

taxes for the public’s general welfare?”

By now our picture is multidimensional and multifaceted. Perhaps some strokes might be thicker or the paint thinner in this or that place. Some aspects don’t fit so comfortably with others. Unlike art, nothing is ever “whole” in politics (except a totalitarian quest). Still, I think our more complex picture reveals how most of the left’s history comprises struggles for democracy and hopes that social imagination might undo social inequities. Yes, part of the story is unhappy. And yes, part of the left—call it “the left-that-doesn’t-learn”—has always thought that if the world doesn’t fit its dogmas, the world is disproved. In its post-9/11 guise, it tries to show that somehow, “in the final analysis,” all of American history, and not fundamentalist terrorists, was responsible for that awful day. As if Osama bin Laden was protesting the fact that Thomas Jefferson owned slaves.

But consider, isn’t the left’s history a bit like America’s? Millions of people on both sides of the Atlantic identified with “the left” in the hope that the powerless, the voiceless, and the poor might one day have some control over their own days, that they would be able to speak up and to live decently. The American Revolution promised equality and freedom, and since 1776, millions of people were liberated in a wide variety of ways by coming to these shores. Yet just as the left has had wretched moments, so America’s past cannot be airbrushed of some grim matters, such as slavery or the fate of Native Americans or discrimination against women or exploitation of working people. The more you think about “anti-leftism” and “anti-Americanism” together, the more they seem to share an untoward one-sidedness. Anti-leftism and anti-Americanism, much like left-wing ideological blinders and conservative nationalist swagger, also represent the longing for an “era BC—Before Complexity.”

YOU WON’T FIND one “*Dissent*” answer to all questions in our pages, or the aspiration to formulate one. Instead, you will find, broadly speaking, an underlying ethos that is humanist, inclusive and “equality-friendly.” Political ideas are argued in order to address human dilemmas and not to defend a theory’s honor; justifications of social inequal-

ity are treated with skepticism, with a presumption that the burden of moral proof ought to rest on an apologist for this or that inequality.

The “*Dissent* left”—I hesitate to use this unifying phrase, and it should not indicate too much unity—was born under the shadow of the Two Josephs (Stalin and McCarthy). It dissented against both of them, and has been animated by a democratic sensibility. The magazine’s founders usually called themselves “democratic socialists,” and some current contributors still do. Others among them identify as “liberal socialists” or “social democrats” or “social liberals” or “liberal left” or some combination of these words—or they may be averse to any label. Howe, who was *Dissent*’s moving spirit from the magazine’s founding until his death in 1993, once said that he wanted the “socialization of concern” rather than the nationalization of the means of production. Michael Walzer, political philosopher and co-editor of *Dissent* since 1975, has long been an eloquent proponent of pluralism in American society and within left-wing thinking. Michael Harrington, America’s leading socialist from the 1960s through the 1980s and a long-time member of the *Dissent* editorial board, argued for “the left-wing of the possible.”

Some of *Dissent*’s founders—Howe, Emmanuel Geltman, Stanley Plastrik—were once activists in a “Trotskyist” variant of the Old Left, just before and after the Second World War. Their education and experience in a small organization inspired by Leon Trotsky, Stalin’s rival (and victim), immunized them against communist parties and totalitarian rationalizations. But, finally, they also rebelled against the stiff mindset of their own “party,” decided to leave Bolshevik furries behind, and sought a politics rooted in American democratic radicalism and in an American idiom. They suspected that sectarianism in language and sectarianism in thought make up a joint venture. (The same suspicions made many *Dissenters* leery of “postmodern” theories in the 1980s and 1990s). They moved closer to the old American Socialist Party of Eugene V. Debs and Norman Thomas. They intermingled with the world of “New York Intellectuals” and read their little magazines, such as *Partisan Review* and *Politics*.

They also concluded that efforts to stuff the

world into an all-encompassing design (derived from an all-knowing theory) result in disaster. That didn’t mean casting away all forms of social vision. In an early *Dissent* article entitled “Images of Socialism,” Coser and Howe insisted on the legitimacy of utopian imagination. The word utopia, they recalled, means literally “nowhere.” Failed radical experiments showed how mistaken it was to try to reach nowhere, that is, to try to impose a “perfect,” conflict-free society. At the same time, they proposed, an image of a better, fairer, world could and ought to play the role of a “regulative idea.” Social imagination could and ought to draw everyday politics beyond “curdled realism” to novel possibilities, to innovation in addressing social and political problems. Utopia warranted two genuine cheers, Howe wrote in his last essay for the journal before his death, but not three. After all, the world is complex. Still, the point was to pull beyond “the provincialism of the immediate” and to grasp “the democratic utopianism that runs like a bright thread through American intellectual life—call it Emersonianism, call it republicanism, call it whatever you like.”

A PROMINENT ACADEMIC told me a few years ago that he had been in the Weather Underground, the violent breakaway faction of Students for a Democratic Society, and that his comrades planned around 1970 to bomb the *Dissent* office, “but we couldn’t find it.” Other people told me subsequently that this story was fiction. It was true, however, that the *Dissent* circle and the early SDS, who might have been inter-generational allies, clashed politically and temperamentally in the 1960s. Communism was one source of this bitter quarrel, which took place in both face-to-face arguments and in print. Many New Leftists later concluded that Howe and Harrington were indeed right to call for a complete divorce of the left from all forms of authoritarianism, but the *Dissenters* later rued their own ferocity in the debate, regretting that they had perhaps slipped back into the sectarian style that they had long rejected.

The famous “generation gap” of the 1960s also played a role. The *Dissenters* were children of the 1930s, and the murderous fraudulence of the Moscow Trials was for them a for-

mative experience. Members of the early SDS were children of the 1950s, and McCarthy's witch-hunt was their formative experience, disposing them strongly against anticommunism. The *Dissenters* had in fact been forcefully anti-McCarthy, and the early SDS advocated participatory democracy, not communism. The 1960s was a decade of great idealism (for example, in the civil rights movement), but also bitter disappointments and acrimony, and a process of generational and intellectual mending on the left could only begin later, in the 1970s and 1980s, when the New Left was in shambles and the liberal left in retreat. A number of former activists in the New Left began contributing to *Dissent's* pages then and were soon welcomed onto its editorial board.

If members of the Weather Underground actually set their sights on the *Dissent* office, there was a reason why they failed to find it. It didn't exist. *Dissent* for years had a Fifth Avenue address, but it was only a mail-drop. The magazine always published with modest resources and no institutional base, counting instead on the commitments of editors, writers, an underpaid, part-time staff, and a few friends. In order to bomb the *Dissent* office, the Weather Underground would have had to target the Upper West Side apartment of Simone and Stanley Plastrik. First Stanley, and after his death, Simone, managed *Dissent's* finances. Simone herself was a veteran of a very different underground, the French Resistance during World War II. Her dining room was *Dissent's* "office" until her death in 1999, after which the magazine rented a studio.

Out of its cramped space, and run editorially now through the less definable space of e-mail, *Dissent* keeps dissenting and appearing in print every three months. I sometimes wonder what sort of exchange might occur if members of *Dissent's* original circle were transported by some H.G. Wellsian means from a 1954 editorial discussion to a meeting taking place a half a century later. They would probably be dismayed to find that they left one America longing for an "era BC," only to arrive in another. They would be saddened by the steady weakness of the American left as well as the unions. They would be heartened, I think, by *Dissent's* resilience (most little magazines have short life

spans). At first they'd be a little puzzled to hear today's editors discussing what to circulate on the Web. ("The Web?—it sounds like J. Edgar Hoover's idea of a communist plot!") Once they understood better the communications revolution of the last decade, they would probably want to discuss its democratic potentials and the threats it might pose to individual liberties or private life. They might also wonder about the impact of Internet brevity and speed on intellectual life, on reflective reading and thinking habits and public debate; indeed, on the prospects of small magazines that value extended arguments by intellectuals about what is good and what is bad, what is happening and what ought to happen.

Today's editors would tell them what *Dissent's* readers have known for the last decade: if it was difficult to be on the left while communism continued, it also hasn't been so easy to redefine the left in communism's wake. Communism's fall came along with globalization's rise and great transformations in the international economy. Many of the old coordinates dissolved in the 1990s, and then some more disappeared after September 11. Yet the world always seems to get simpler for many conservatives. Recall the applause for Francis Fukuyama's claim that all major intellectual issues were resolved by the victory of liberal democracy over communism. His book proclaiming *The End of History* was a flight manual for intellectuals who wanted to go on automatic pilot after the ideological wars of the twentieth century. But this was a bad way to enter a new era. If you expect a post-intellectual, post-problem world, you needn't care much about democracy, and you probably won't read *Dissent*. *Dissenters* cheered the end of communism, but they also mistrusted all-encompassing explanations, partly because someone or something important always seems to be missing from them.

Better to make the picture more complicated, both for your intellectual foes and for yourself. *Dissent* will try to keep doing so in its sixth decade. ●

MITCHELL COHEN is co-editor of *Dissent*. This essay will introduce *50 Years of Dissent*, a fiftieth anniversary anthology to be published later this year by Yale University Press.

Rudderless in the Storm

Arab Politics Before and After the Iraq War

Fawaz A. Gerges

WHILE THE UNITED STATES and Britain are engaged in a heated debate regarding the official explanations and justifications offered for the war on Iraq, no similar soul searching has occurred in the Arab world. Arab rulers have little to say about the dismal failure of their diplomacy and their inability to act in a way that would have put the interests of the Iraqi people over those of Saddam Hussein. On the eve of the war, Arab politicians fretted over merely tactical issues—whether to publicize their opposition to the U.S.-led war or to pin the blame on Hussein—rather than helping Iraqis rid themselves of a tyrannical regime.

Inter-Arab diplomacy was more of a public relations exercise than a concerted effort at resolving the crisis. Words were substituted for actions. The Iraqi crisis has added weight to the accusation that Arabs are *zahira sawtiya* (a merely polemical phenomenon), taken seriously by neither friend nor foe. Regardless of whether the ruling elites appreciated the gravity of the crisis and its potential repercussions on regional order, their inaction highlighted not only the splits within their ranks but also their moral bankruptcy.

The old order was crumbling before their eyes. Yet Arab leaders buried their heads in the sand, hoping that the storm would pass with minimum damage to their autocratic rule. No serious thought was given to taking the lead in trying to force Saddam Hussein out of power, thus forestalling the U.S. war and sparing the Iraqi people. Given the obsessive determination of the Bush administration to go to war against Saddam's regime, the Arabs could not have it both ways: saving both the regime and Iraq's suffering population. They failed to make

a clear decision to help the people and so sided indirectly with Saddam.

To act on behalf of the people would have required both visionary leadership, a willingness to take risks, and a tough political realism—traits in short supply in the Arab world. What transpired instead on the diplomatic scene were vacuous formalities, procrastination, recrimination, and inaction: in other words, stasis. Arab rulers proved true to the norm, speaking in double-tongued proclamations and innuendoes to their own populations and the world. They publicly swore by the Almighty to oppose the coming war, while privately feigning impotence and promising to support their superpower patron. Never mind that they didn't test or maximize their bargaining power as Turkey did. Never mind that they didn't level with their citizens about being beholden to Washington and about Saddam Hussein's numbered days. A convincing argument could have been made that Hussein must go for the sake of the Iraqi people and the survival of their state—not just because the White House aimed at the destruction of the Baath regime.

But to ask for forethought would have been asking too much of a cynical, hardened lot who have survived for so long by mastering the art of double-talk and obfuscation. Hardly any lessons were learned from previous crises in 1967 and 1990. The problem with their charade is not only that it has deepened public cynicism—unleashing a frenzy of conspiratorial theories; it has also exacerbated the legitimacy crisis of the Arab political order. Never before have the ruling autocrats been as naked in the eyes of their publics as they are now. Never before has the gap been larger between the Arab ruling elite and the people they rule. It is a miracle that the autocratic Arab state system has endured for so long with so little legitimacy. The possibility of its sudden collapse, along

Iranian lines, cannot be discounted. In the meantime, politics mutates into extremism at home and terrorism abroad. The seeds of both lie in the structure of the closed Arab system and the unholy alliance between the ruling social classes and the conservative religious establishment.

What Did the Arab States Want?

The men in power cared neither about Saddam Hussein nor about his captive subjects. Their overriding goal was to preserve the status quo and limit the impact of the crisis on their tribal fiefdoms. They also hoped to please the Bush administration and avoid being targeted by its hard-liners. Their immediate political survival took precedence over everything else, regardless of the long-term corrosive effects of the crisis on their rule and on the geo-strategic balance of power.

When heads of Arab states finally met in Cairo on the eve of the war, they split into two camps. The radicals—Syria, Yemen, Libya, and Sudan—wished to affirm their opposition to the coming war and to ban any Arab state from providing logistical and material support to invading American forces. Although America's allies—Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Kuwait—all agreed to register opposition to the war, they refused to go along with the ban on logistical support. After all, these governments had already granted the Bush administration access to their bases and ports by previous agreement. It was, as everyone knew, a done deal. But the traditional form of inter-Arab ritual verbal exchange had to be faithfully observed, irrespective of the complete lack of substance.

In a nutshell, the Arab summit at the eve of the war was a dismal failure. It revealed deep rifts among Arab states and a general lack of foresight and vision. The radicals took the ideological high ground without considering the plight of the Iraqi people and the boiling anger of the United States. The moderates lacked intellectual forethought and the moral courage to establish the ground rules for avoiding war: Saddam Hussein and his close associates would have to go, and then the world community, along with the Arab League, would have to assist Iraqis in reconstituting their shattered

institutions along more representative lines. Although that wouldn't have been easy, given Hussein's obsession with retaining power, even he, when faced with a united Arab front and an imminent foreign invasion, might have sought a diplomatic way out—a face-saving formula that ensured his own and his family's survival.

Such a risky strategy by the moderate Arab states would have been preferable to inaction because it would have aligned the majority of Arabs with the Iraqi people. Without that they were reduced to being passive onlookers of the unfolding drama, playing unwittingly into the hands of Hussein as well as of the Bush administration. The split within Arab ranks enabled the former to claim, and perhaps even to believe he had, a valid mandate to cling to power regardless of the costs to Iraq and its people and the latter to claim tacit Arab support for its military campaign.

Arab radicals and moderates did not wish to establish a precedent by forcing one of their own out of power, particularly at the insistence of a crusading superpower with a far-reaching agenda. They were more concerned with preserving their own power positions. The ideologues in the Bush administration did not help matters by their thinly veiled threats to replace all the authoritarian regimes in the region with democratically constituted ones. Arab autocrats, regardless of political orientation, felt targeted, and so they united in opposition to the American democratizing project. They had little incentive to facilitate Hussein's removal from power and thus hasten their own demise.

The cost of their inaction was that Arabs exercised no leverage over the Iraqi crisis, even though it struck at the very foundation of their political order. American officials spent considerable effort negotiating with Turkey and offering billions of dollars for use of its military bases. They also held secret talks with Iranian representatives to ensure Iran's neutrality during the war. In contrast, the United States had no reason to take the Arab states, radical or moderate, seriously.

Arab Public Opinion

Arab societies, not just Arab rulers, were deeply divided on how to deal with the Iraqi crisis.

An alarming gap existed between Arab public opinion and its Iraqi counterpart. Deeply suspicious of U.S. foreign policy and socialized into an anti-American mind-set, Arab public opinion, or "the Arab street" as labeled by Western media, was overwhelmingly against the U.S. war. In Arab eyes, nothing good in foreign policy comes from the United States, which is seen to be hostile to their national interests. Forced to choose between liberation for Iraqis at American hands or direct or indirect support for Saddam Hussein, Arab public opinion, still enthralled by Nasserite ideology and Islamist symbols, chose the latter.

In contrast, Iraqis had more nuanced views and were desperate to be rid of their tyrant. Although they did not support a military invasion, they appeared willing to give the United States the benefit of the doubt in its campaign to topple the Baathist regime. They held their suspicion of the United States in check until the dust settled on the Iraqi battlefield. Many Arabs didn't fully appreciate the predicament of Iraqis terrorized by Saddam Hussein. They allowed their ideological preferences and elite interests to take precedence over human rights and freedom for their Iraqi brothers and sisters. The result is that now many Iraqis feel estranged from and deserted by other Arabs. Some are even calling for a realignment that frees Iraq from its Arab environment. A divisive feud is being fought between embittered Iraqis and unrepentant Arabs on the airways and editorial pages of leading newspapers. Its reverberations transcend Iraq and will likely shake the very foundation of inter-Arab relations.

The Iraqi crisis has discredited and weakened the Arab League. More important, it has shattered old myths regarding Arab solidarity and unity, the role of public opinion, and the meaning of "Arabness." Arabs were not only deeply divided, but they, or many of them, tacitly consented to the invasion and occupation of a sister state by a foreign power. Arab rulers stand naked in the eyes of their restive people, and the latter are pointing accusatory fingers at each other for failing Iraq and Iraqis. Iraqis reproach their fellow Arabs for their silence regarding Saddam's crimes against humanity: three hundred thousand Iraqis disappeared

during the twenty-four years of his rule.

Now, months after the end of the war, Arab rulers have little to say about their vision for a post-Baath Iraq. Beyond generalities regarding the need for swift political enfranchisement of Iraqis, they have not clarified the role they would like to play in the new Iraq or the contribution they are willing to make to the reconstruction of Iraqi state and society. So far no serious proposal has been put on the table to deploy, for example, thousands of Arab peacekeepers in Iraq, within the context of an international multilateral force, to help secure the peace and intensify pressure on the Bush administration to transfer power. Such a policy initiative would indicate that Arab states are genuinely interested in making a difference in their own part of the world.

It is not convincing to claim, as Arab leaders do, that they are helpless, that the hardliners in the Bush administration oppose their engagement in Iraq lest they create a new order in their own authoritarian image. The hardliners in Washington are politically allergic to the whole international community, not just the Arabs. The latter can help shape the course of events in Iraq by joining international efforts to replace the logic of U.S. occupation with the logic of legitimate local authority. Inaction threatens to marginalize the Arabs further.

New Social Contract

A widespread sense of powerlessness pervades Arab political culture. In the old world, myths die hard. Arabs are faced with a grim reality of failed inter-Arab institutions and a paralyzing fixation on the chimera of pan-nationalist identity. The obsession with pan-nationalism has stalled the process of individual nation-building and has enabled brutal dictators to wreak havoc on their societies. Saddam Hussein, for example, justified his wars against Iran and Kuwait as a defense of Arab unity. Many horrors have been committed in the name of this once noble dream.

There is also a moral cost that has to be paid for the obsession with collective identity. Why should the sovereignty and sanctity of the Iraqi regime come before the welfare of its citizens? And does it matter if the country that freed the subjugated Iraqis was not Arab and

was pursuing an ambitious agenda, extending far beyond freedom? Those painful questions are just beginning to be debated—but in a highly charged and volatile context. The big challenge is how to replace the discourse of defeat with the discourse of cultural and political renewal.

No tinkering with the existing order will do. Rather, there is an urgent need to structurally reform intra- and inter-Arab institutions and empower civil society. Respect for human rights and individual rights must be legally enshrined. Neither the interests of the separate nation-states nor of their trans-political, pan-Arab union should take precedence over those of the individual citizen. A free citizenry will prove more loyal to its country than a fettered one.

A new social contract is urgently needed to base the power of those who govern on the consent of the governed. Institutions that serve the common interest and generate a broad prosperity must replace the stagnant arrangements that cause today's blight and despair. Top priority should go to addressing the three key development challenges to the Arab world: dealing with the deficits in political freedom, the empowerment of women, and access to knowledge.

For example, this year's Arab Human Development Report, commissioned by the United Nations Development Program and written by more than forty Arab scholars, highlights the danger of the growing knowledge gap between the Arab region and the rest of the world. Data in the report tell a sad story of continued stagnation and decline in many areas of knowledge production and diffusion. The mass media are the most important agents for the public diffusion of knowledge, yet Arab countries have lower information media to population ratios than other nations. More damaging is that the Arab media operate in a harsh environment that restricts freedom of expression; most media are state owned.

Moreover, although the Arab countries represent 5 percent of world population, they produce only 1.1 percent of the world's books. True, they produce many religious pamphlets, but relatively few books that contribute to critical knowledge. Translation is a crucial chan-

nel for disseminating ideas and communicating with the rest of the world (at its apogee, Muslim culture was singularly responsible, through translation, for preserving classical ideas). Yet there are more books translated annually in one European country, Spain, than in all twenty-two Arab states. There are just eighteen computers per thousand people in the Arab world, compared with seventy-eight per thousand globally. Only 1.6 percent of the population has Internet access.

Equally alarming are the high rates of illiteracy among women in some of the less developed Arab countries. Many children still do not have access to basic education. And the education they get is declining in quality. College graduates tend to be ill-prepared to compete in the modern world. Those who are better prepared are increasingly disposed to emigrate in search of economic opportunities and political freedom. Roughly 25 percent of first-degree graduates in 1995-1996 emigrated. Between 1998 and 2000 more than fifteen thousand Arab doctors emigrated. The Arab region is being depopulated of its most educated citizens, with serious ramifications to long-term sociopolitical and economic development.

Catching up with the world, and building a knowledge society, requires vital investment in education and scientific research, in families, and in the news media. But most of all it requires opening up and democratizing the closed political process. Arab citizens, the authors of the UN report write, feel oppressed, excluded, and "pushed away from effecting changes in their societies." They must be integrated into the system and given an opportunity to make a difference.

In the end, however, the Arab scholars stress that structural reforms must come from within, through an evolutionary social process. Only Arabs, with international assistance, can succeed in transforming their societies. Change cannot be imposed from without. No external country, regardless of how powerful, can make the necessary reforms. Military and political shocks could even produce backlash and further delay the process of liberalization and democratization—indeed, in the minds of many Arabs, democracy is already closely as-

sociated with European colonialism.

It is no wonder that so much rides on the Iraqi project. On the one hand, the flourishing of democracy in Baghdad could lead many Arabs to disinvest from their historical grievances against the West. Failure in Iraq, the creation of yet another American-supported authoritarian regime, will reinforce widely held opinions that democracy is but a tool designed to perpetuate Western hegemony over the vast portion of the Muslim world that belongs to

the Arabs. But success requires Arab initiative: where will it come from? ●

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Israel/Palestine: Is There A Case for Bi-nationalism?

Shalom Lappin

SINCE THE START of the second Palestinian Intifada in September 2000 there has been a resurgence of interest in a one-state bi-national model for solving the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. The idea is achieving increasing popularity among people on the liberal left who had previously supported a two-state solution, and it has found new endorsement among both Jews and Palestinian Arabs. Tony Judt's advocacy of bi-nationalism in "Israel: The Alternative" (*New York Review of Books*, October 23, 2003) generated intense controversy in Jewish and Israeli circles. Several weeks prior to the appearance of Judt's piece, Ahmad Khalidi, a Palestinian scholar at St. Antony's College, Oxford, and a long time proponent of two states, published "A One-State Solution" (*The Guardian*, September 29, 2003) in which he anticipated many of Judt's arguments. It is odd that Khalidi and Judt have chosen a point in this long and brutal conflict when the violence and mutual bitterness are particularly intense to promote a framework that requires the two sides to share sovereignty. Given that many bi- and multinational states have failed to accommodate distinct national groups under far more auspicious circum-

stances (as illustrated in the dissolution of Czechoslovakia and the bloody collapse of the Yugoslav federation), it is important to examine carefully the current arguments for a bi-national framework. It is also worth considering why they are being pressed so vigorously at this time.

Supporters of the new bi-nationalism invoke two main arguments to motivate their case. First, they claim that it provides a democratic alternative to a sectarian Jewish state organized along lines of ethnic privilege. By granting equal rights to Israelis and Palestinians it becomes the state of all its residents rather than an instrument for preserving the dominance of one group at the expense of the other.

Second, bi-nationalists argue that thirty-seven years of Israeli occupation and settlement in the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem have irrevocably changed the infrastructure and demography of these territories in such a way as to render a partition effectively impossible. Uprooting the settlements is politically no longer feasible. The two populations have been mixed to the point that they can no longer be pulled apart. The only viable alternative to the continued occupation and dispossession of the Palestinians is, therefore, a single egalitarian state that accords the same rights to Jews and Arabs alike. This view was first presented in the mid-1980s by Meron

Benvenisti, the former deputy mayor of Jerusalem, who conducted extensive research on the effect of the Israeli occupation on the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Before I take up these arguments let me set the current discussion in the context of the generally forgotten history of the bi-national idea for Israel/Palestine.

Bi-nationalism as a Zionist Proposal

The proposal for a bi-national Jewish-Arab state in Palestine has its origins in the Zionist left, where it was advanced by two main groups during the period of the British Mandate from the 1920s until 1947. The first, Brit Shalom (1925-1933), and its successor, the Ihud, consisted largely of western liberal Zionists such as Judah Magnes, Haim Kalvarisky, Arthur Ruppin, Hugo Bergman, and Martin Buber. They saw a liberal bi-national model as the best framework for reconciling competing Jewish and Arab political aspirations. The second, Hashomer Hatsair (Young Guard), was a socialist Zionist Kibbutz movement that was committed to constructing a bi-national Jewish-Arab workers state on radically egalitarian principles.

Although these groups represented a minority view within the Yishuv (the Jewish community in Palestine) and the Zionist movement generally, they were not without influence. The mainstream Zionist leadership, particularly Chaim Weizmann, followed with interest and skeptical encouragement the attempts of the Ihud to negotiate agreements with Palestinian Arab leaders. Mapam (United Workers Party), the parliamentary arm created by Hashomer Hatsair and two other left-Zionist groups, was the second largest party in the Knesset, after Ben-Gurion's Mapai (Israel Workers Party), in the first years of independence.

The bi-national program was entertained as a possibility by substantial sections of the Zionist left in the early 1920s, but attitudes changed drastically after the Arab riots of 1929. These events revealed the depth of the conflict of national interests and produced a militant reaction in much of the Yishuv. In response to the continuing intercommunal violence and the near universal opposition of the Palestinian Arab leadership to Jewish immigration,

many leaders of the Yishuv, Ben-Gurion foremost among them, came to see the problem as intractable, and they adopted an increasingly adversarial attitude toward the Arab population. The rise of fascism in Europe reinforced this. For its part, the Arab leadership, specifically, the al-Husseini family, which dominated Palestinian politics, rejected bi-nationalism out of hand as a Zionist project intended to secure Arab recognition of Jewish immigration and political rights. In his determination to prevent Jewish immigration and political independence in Palestine, Haj Amin al-Husseini, the Mufti of Jerusalem, became pro-Axis and spent most of the war years in Berlin as a supporter of the Third Reich.

BOTH THE IHUD and Hashomer Hatsair attempted to resist the current of conflict throughout the 1940s. Unfortunately their efforts foundered on implacable Arab rejectionism. On November 11, 1946, the Ihud signed an agreement with Fawzi Darwish al-Husseini's Young Palestine group for common political action in support of a bi-national state. Fawzi was assassinated several days later by a rival faction of the al-Husseini family, which branded him a traitor to the Arab cause. Similarly Sami Taha, a Palestinian labor leader, was killed in September 1947, for advocating the creation of a nonsectarian Palestinian state representing the interests of both Jews and Arabs (see Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1972, for a discussion of these two incidents). Hashomer Hatsair's commitment to bi-nationalism led it to oppose the UN's 1947 partition plan which divided Mandatory Palestine into Jewish and Arab states. Even after it had abandoned this view following the creation of Israel, it continued to work for Jewish-Arab equality and cooperation within the new state. By contrast, the Palestine Liberation Organization, which was founded in 1964, insisted on a unitary Arab state in Palestine until the mid-1970s. Its charter accorded civil and religious rights to Jews who were in Palestine prior to the "Zionist invasion," dated from the Balfour Declaration in 1917, and called for the deportation of those who entered the country afterward.

There is, then, not a little historical irony

in the contemporary presentation of bi-nationalism as a “post-Zionist” solution to the conflict.

Is Bi-nationalism Workable?

At first glance, bi-nationalism seems to offer an attractive exit from the grinding impasse of the current conflict. Both Israelis and Palestinians receive charter to the entire country and so avoid a searing partition of their common homeland. The occupation ends, but the settlements remain. The traditional zero-sum game in which one side realizes its national objectives only by expelling or subordinating the other is avoided. Both Jews and Arabs achieve security and freedom within a single democratic country.

On closer inspection it becomes clear that this idyllic vision rests upon unsustainable assumptions. In order for a bi-national state to succeed, its two constituent peoples must be committed to living in a unified political framework in which they share the instruments of sovereignty equitably between them. Such a commitment requires each to have confidence that it can trust its partner to respect its vital interests as part of a common endeavour. To expect two nations that have been engaged in mortal combat for a century to undertake such a venture is to situate oneself at an acutely unsafe distance from the facts. The overwhelming majority of Israelis and Palestinians have no interest in a shared political life. They regard each other as the main threat to their respective national existences. The contemporary proponents of bi-nationalism have no obvious answer to the well-grounded fears of both sides except an appeal to good faith, which begs the main questions of the dispute.

Fear of losing a demographic balance between the constituent peoples in a bi- (multi) national country is one of the primary sources of its instability. Lebanon provides an instructive instance of this problem. Its political system encodes the assumption of a finely tuned demographic relation among its major ethnic-religious groups. Political and military power is distributed on the basis of this relation, with the positions of president, prime minister, speaker of the parliament, defense minister, and foreign minister reserved for members of

designated communities. For many years no census was taken in Lebanon in order to maintain the illusion that the original demographic division continued to hold long after the size of the Christian population had significantly declined relative to the Shi'ite and Sunni Muslim communities and the Druse. The system fell apart in 1958 and was put back together. The large-scale influx of Palestinian guerrillas and their families from Jordan following the clash between King Hussein of Jordan and the PLO in September 1970 again seriously disrupted the demographic balance and the political arrangements that depended upon it. This event played a central role in creating the conditions that led to the fifteen-year civil war that destroyed the country. Order was eventually restored through a Syrian military occupation, which continues to the present day.

Supporters of a bi-national model frequently point to post-apartheid South Africa as a case of successful transition from an ethnic state to a multicultural democracy. In fact, the analogy does not hold at the most essential points of comparison between the two conflicts. Apartheid enforced the oppressive dominance of a white European elite through segregation along purely racial lines. The groups on both (more accurately, all) sides of its divide were nationally and culturally heterogeneous. English and Afrikaans South Africans are distinct national/ethnic groups, as are the diverse communities that make up the indigenous African, Asian, and “mixed” populations. Apartheid was imposed on an already existing nation-state made up of a variety of cultural communities. These communities had preceded apartheid in the country, and most people from all groups were prepared to embrace the vision of a multicultural society that formed the basis of the African National Congress's liberation struggle.

By contrast, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a clash between two well-defined national entities in a territory that historically never supported a single nation-state. The identity of each nation cuts across racial differences and focuses on language, religion, history, and territory. Although racial factors can play no role in defining the institutions of a democratic state, national, linguistic, and cultural proper-

ties of the sort that separate Israelis and Palestinians are very much the elements from which most countries, including democratic ones, are shaped in one way or another. It is a mistake to suggest that a bi-national state could be non- or postnational in character. To be viable as a democratic venture it would need to express the national identities of the two peoples that make up its population.

In order to accommodate both sides, a bi-national state in Israel/Palestine would have to adopt the right of return for Palestinian refugees while retaining the Law of Return for Jews. Palestinians would use both the right of return and their higher birth rate to achieve demographic dominance. Israelis would attempt to defend their situation in the country by retaining control of the army, as well as key political and economic positions. The inevitable result of this competition would be a bloody civil war. There is, then, good reason to believe that forcing bi-nationalism on Israelis and Palestinians in the foreseeable future would produce something akin to Bosnia or Cyprus, rather than a Middle Eastern Belgium or Canada (both of which, it should be noted, suffer constant separatist tensions). Instead of providing a solution to the conflict the advocates of bi-nationalism are, in fact, suggesting a recipe for perpetuating it.

Will Two States Work?

The relentless expansion of settlements and their attendant infrastructure in the occupied territories under successive Israeli governments has created a major obstacle to the partition required for a two-state solution. The settlers, now 230,000 in number (closer to 400,000 if one includes the Jewish neighborhoods of East Jerusalem), have effectively dictated Israeli policy in the territories despite the fact that opinion polls over the years have consistently indicated that the majority of Israelis do not support the settlement enterprise. However Benvenisti's conclusion, embraced by many proponents of bi-nationalism, that withdrawal to the (equivalent of the) 1967 borders is no longer possible does not follow.

It is important to note the distinction in Israeli public perception of pre-1967 Israel on one hand and of the West Bank, Gaza, and East

Jerusalem on the other. There is near universal consensus among Israelis (Jews and Arabs alike) that the area within the Green Line is legitimately part of the country, although a not insignificant part of this land was added to the borders specified in the original 1947 partition plan as a result of the 1948 war. By contrast, most people, including the settlers, their political allies, and young people born after 1967, recognize the reality of the fact that even after thirty-seven years of occupation the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem have not been absorbed into Israel proper and remain foreign territory. The Green Line continues to be a genuine border in the political psychology of most Israelis, including those committed to erasing it.

The current intifada has shown the impossibility of sustaining the occupation. Although most Israelis realize that their own security requires the (equivalent of a) full withdrawal, they remain traumatized by the failure of the negotiations at Camp David and Taba, and the subsequent violence. Ariel Sharon has successfully exploited this trauma to pursue his longstanding annexationist agenda, but there is little genuine support for this program. In fact, the majority of settlers has indicated a willingness to move back behind the Green Line in exchange for suitable compensation. The most effective criticism of Sharon's policy in the territories is now coming from the upper echelons of the Israeli security establishment, parts of which seem to have finally recognized the damage that the occupation is doing to the viability and well being of the country.

Prominent non-government Israeli and Palestinian politicians signed the Geneva Agreements this past fall, which specify a detailed version of the Clinton proposals from December 2000 (the text and maps of the agreements are posted on the Peace Now Web site at www.peacenow.org.il). Significant proportions of the Israeli and Palestinian populations support this plan even though the Sharon government and Palestinian rejectionist organizations strongly oppose it, and Yasir Arafat has not endorsed it. There are serious questions concerning the willingness and the ability of both sides to implement a plan of this sort. It should be

clear, however, that the framework described in the agreements offers a far more realistic and credible prospect for arriving at a workable solution than bi-nationalism. If the two-state framework of the Geneva Agreements cannot succeed, then it is unclear why one would think that a bi-national state could.

Popularity of the Bi-national Model

It is possible to discern two distinct factors driving the revival of interest in bi-nationalism. The first is deep frustration at the failure of the Oslo process and a sense of hopelessness due to the unyielding cycle of terrorism and repression that has replaced it. Well-meaning observers watch how the Israeli and Palestinian leaders use this violence to sustain themselves in power at the expense of the suffering of their respective peoples. They see the inability or unwillingness of external players, particularly the United States, to exert the sort of pressure required to produce a change in either side. As a result, these observers have taken refuge in the utopian reverie of bi-nationalism as a radical retreat from the appalling realities of the clash. This move expresses a desire to be rid, finally, of a brutal dispute that appears to defy rational resolution. Although this reaction is certainly understandable, it amounts to little more than a politics of despair. In no sense does it offer a constructive, realistic response to the facts of the situation.

The second factor is far less innocent. It consists in the promotion of bi-nationalism as a device for eliminating a Jewish polity of any kind. People who regard Israel's existence as illicit or are embarrassed by it now embrace the rhetoric of bi-nationalism as a strategy for rendering palatable a program whose objective is the removal of any form of Jewish political independence in the Middle East. In characterizing the proposed single state as "non-sectarian" they conceal the fact that its political and cultural character will be determined by

its majority. They rely on the fact that should a one-state solution be imposed, demography will generate an Arab country in which Israeli Jews constitute a politically contained minority with certain "cultural rights." This is, of course, not bi-nationalism at all, but the exploitation of bi-national terminology in the service of a program that denies the legitimacy of Jews in general and Israeli Jews in particular as a nation.

There is no escape from the fact that the Israeli-Palestinian problem is a conflict between two nations, each insisting on its right to live in the same territory. Any rational solution to this conflict requires that the basic needs and (at least) minimal concerns of both sides be realized. Given the nature of the competition between them, this cannot be achieved within a single state. Eliminating or suppressing one of the sides through expulsion or forced absorption is not a reasonable option. There is, then, no viable alternative to providing two states to two peoples. To the extent that either of these states is democratic, it will accord equal rights to all of its residents. Its national character will be determined not by discriminatory legislation or coercive practice, but by the fact that its culture and its primary language are those of its majority population. That implementing a two-state solution will be excruciatingly difficult is not sufficient grounds for adopting a one-state model that has virtually no chance of success. In light of the desperate need of Israelis and Palestinians for an end to the violence that they are inflicting upon each other, abandoning the only program that offers any chance of achieving peace is not simply misguided. It is deeply irresponsible. ●

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Fault Lines on the Left

French Intellectuals and the Socialist Party

Richard Wolin

IN THE FALL of 2001 a slight book with a stern title, *Call to Order: Investigation Concerning the New Reactionaries*, sent minor shock waves throughout Parisian intellectual circles. The book's author was Daniel Lindenberg, a historian and frequent contributor to the left-liberal monthly *Esprit*.

The key to understanding this tempest is in the book's subtitle. Who are the "New Reactionaries"? Do they share a common ideology? And, if so, is it worth much time and energy to expose their alleged misdeeds?

Among Lindenberg's antagonists are

- literary *enfant terrible* **Michel Houellebecq**. This novelist is the author of *The Elementary Particles*, a merciless indictment of the narcissistic excesses and unbridled hedonism supposedly practiced by the ex-68ers who have dominated French cultural and intellectual life for the past three decades. In a recent outburst, he has also referred to Islam as "the stupidest religion of all" ("*La religion la plus con*"), an offense for which he was sued for religious defamation by two of France's leading Islamic organizations;

- novelists **Philippe Muray** and **Michel Dantec**. Although they are less known in the Anglo-Saxon world, Muray and Dantec, like Houellebecq, have expressed a similar revulsion against left-wing "political correctness," in various forms such as antiracism and cultural populism. They also attack what they see as left-wing libidinal licentiousness bordering on social irresponsibility;

- **Luc Ferry**, a philosopher and now minister of education under the current Chirac-Raffarin regime. In *French Philosophy of the 1960s* (co-written with Alain Renaut) and other works, Ferry pointedly criticized hedonistic individu-

alism as an unintended outcome of the May '68 student revolt. More recently, Ferry has been a noted champion of "republicanism," a political ethos that privileges the well-being of the nation over individual rights and liberties;

- **Marcel Gauchet**, co-editor of the influential quarterly *Le Débat* and the author of *Democracy Against Itself*, a collection of essays criticizing the corrosive effects of democratic individualism; and

- **Pierre Manent**, a noted political philosopher and disciple of Leo Strauss, who has written a number of books that criticize the insufficiencies of political liberalism.

Lindenberg thinks these figures are united in an unholy alliance against France's reigning democratic political consensus. They are, he believes, neo-Spenglerian prophets of decline, who reprise the lamentations of counterrevolutionary *Kulturkritik*, denouncing the failings of mass society in the mandarin idiom of the German 1920s.

Lindenberg complains that this antiliberal idiom has flourished not only among the anti-'68 literati, but also among leftists. He identifies a trio of former followers of the late communist philosopher Louis Althusser as the main offenders. In Lindenberg's view, Etienne Balibar, Alain Badiou, and Jacques Rancière are stridently dismissive of French socialism's genuine achievements: maintaining the minimal trappings of the welfare state despite formidable international pressures to "liberalize"; standing up to the xenophobic populism of Jean-Marie Le Pen's National Front; and stressing "human rights" as the indispensable moral-political basis of the expanding European Union. The ex-Althusserians belittle these gains in stereotypically Marxist fashion as an ideological ruse that masks bourgeois interest, in this case, the globalization agenda. Lindenberg thinks that this sort of politics has deprived French socialists of badly needed sup-

port on the left. Now the socialists are in dire political straits—easy prey for the Gaullists, whose grip on power seems, for the foreseeable future, unchallengeable.

Call to Order reads like a hastily conceived book. It weighs in at fewer than a hundred pages. Still, it appears to have scored a direct hit against its targets. For several weeks, *Le Monde*, *Le Figaro*, and *Le Nouvel Observateur*, opened their pages to Lindenberg's detractors and defenders. The fallout from the "Lindenberg debate" was dissected by journalists throughout Europe, in keeping with the (risky) maxim that Parisian intellectual strife is inherently newsworthy. At the same time, many French *maîtres-à-penser* (master thinkers) sought to belittle the controversy as much ado about nothing. And in January 2003, *Esprit*—Lindenberg's journalistic base—published a sizeable dossier harshly critical of his book's main tenets.

NEVERTHELESS, this overheated debate attests to the fact that the book touched a raw nerve. It seems to have exposed the divisions that, in recent years, have rent the French intellectual left. In the eyes of many, these fissures were in part responsible for the Socialist Party's disastrous performance in the first round of the 2002 presidential elections, in which Lionel Jospin ran behind Le Pen (who, in the ensuing runoff, was handily bested by Jacques Chirac).

Lindenberg doesn't propose that the "new reactionaries" actually conspired against the Fifth Republic's left-liberal political culture. He does maintain that, wittingly or unwittingly, they undermined the democratic-egalitarian political consensus that has been actively fostered during the two decades during which the Socialist Party dominated French politics. Between 1981 and 2000, there were only two years, from 1995 to 1997, in which the Socialists failed to hold the office of president or prime minister. One of Lindenberg's motivations in condemning the "new reactionaries"—both "right" and "left"—was to defend the honor of the twenty years of Socialists in government.

Among "literary reactionaries" such as Houellebecq, Muray, and Dantec, it is fashion-

able to question left-wing "political correctness." They have tried to show in a deliberately provocative manner that the "Other" is not always the loveable and well-intentioned soul he or she is made out to be by anti-racist pedagogy. All three authors tried to unsettle the commonplaces of French "anti-racism," which, since the 1980s, have served as a left-liberal mainstay against the chauvinism of the National Front. Yet because the "anti-anti-racist" idiom in question transpires in a largely *literary* discourse, it is hard to know just how seriously to take the "offending" speech acts.

Lindenberg seems to have overplayed his hand by drawing parallels between contemporary anti-democratic disaffection and two previous epochs: the 1890s, which saw the emergence of a vituperative, anti-Republican and anti-Semitic right led by *Action Française* founder Charles Maurras, and the 1930s, in which "nonconformist" intellectuals and politicians crossed over from "left" to "right" in significant numbers, thereby preparing the ideological terrain for Vichy. One reason why Lindenberg's search for historical antecedents seems tenuous is that figures such as Ferry, Gauchet, and ex-Guevarista Régis Debray remain convinced republicans. Hence, although each has chastised Socialist Party orthodoxies—often from the left—to tar them with the "new reactionary" label as Lindenberg does defies common sense.

Few would deny that Lindenberg provoked an extremely confused debate. Nevertheless, the controversy reveals fault lines within the French left and reflects the disorientation that arose following Le Pen's "April surprise" in the 2002 elections. (It is worth noting that the French press commonly compares the April 21 *débâcle*—without a trace of irony—to the September 11 terror attacks.) As Jospin's presidential aspirations collapsed, commentators proclaimed the end of the era that began with Mitterrand's 1971 Epinay-sur-Seine program and crested with his election to the presidency ten years later. Above all, the Lindenberg affair reveals the existence of overlapping crises: a crisis of the French left that overlaps with an intellectual crisis and a general crisis of European socialism.

Jospin's defeat left Mitterrand's Socialist

Party (PS) in tatters. In 1993 legislative elections, with Mitterrand as president, the Gaullists won five hundred National Assembly seats to a mere fifty for the Socialists. But, thanks to a magisterial political blunder by Chirac—a premature call for new legislative elections—the PS, now led by Jospin, recovered and became the majority party once again in 1997. Jospin moved to the Matignon (the prime minister's residence).

FOLLOWING THE 1993 setback, several outstanding, even charismatic, candidates positioned themselves to be Mitterrand's heir. These included ex-prime ministers Laurent Fabius and Michel Rocard, former European Commission president Jacques Delors (who eventually decided not to seek the party leadership), as well as Jospin. In the eighteen months since the 2002 defeat, however, no clear leader has emerged. Relatively bland figures such as François Hollande, Dominique Strauss-Kahn, and Pierre Moscovici, all of whom convey competence rather than charisma, have jockeyed for power. The reigning consensus suggests that none of them is *presidentiable*. Last spring's party congress at Dijon seems to have resolved few issues. For a long time, Mitterrand's knack for electoral success allowed him to camouflage the PS's ideological confusion. But the party's 2002 thrashing left party stalwarts without cover. Mitterrand's political origins were one complicating factor. When he refashioned a moribund French Socialist Party at the Epinay Congress in 1971, marking the birth of the "modern" PS, Mitterrand opportunistically crossed over politically from a small center-republican party.

In his very early years—back in the 1930s—Mitterrand flirted with far-right politics, attending meetings of the conspiratorial, anti-republican *Cagoule* ("monk's cowl"). Following a stint as a prisoner of war, he served as an administrator under Marshal Philippe Pétain before joining the Resistance circa 1942. Before his change, Mitterrand was personally rewarded by Pétain with Vichy's highest honor, the *francisque*. Many of these facts first came to light in 1994 when Pierre Péan's biography of Mitterrand, *Une Jeunesse française*, was published. Mitterrand's PS com-

rades were shocked to learn that their leader had also maintained close personal ties with René Bousquet. This ex-Vichy police commissioner had been responsible for the infamous July 1942 deportation of French Jews. From a political standpoint, Péan's revelations were indispensable in understanding Mitterrand. They demonstrated that his "anti-capitalist" sentiments derived not from socialist ideas but from the right-wing Catholic milieu he frequented as a youth.

These facts allow us to make more sense of Mitterrand's dizzying political opportunism. He ceaselessly reinvented himself. First he was a right-wing nationalist, then a Vichyite, then a *résistant*, then a centrist, then a unifier of the left, then an Olympian president, and finally an ardent Europeanist. When his two-term presidency ended in 1995, he seemed more of an enigma than ever. The man who was once one of the Fifth Republic's leading critics (in 1964 he penned a scathing diatribe against the "presidential republic" called *The Permanent Coup d'Etat*) ultimately turned its institutions to his own advantage. His fourteen-year "reign"—an "imperial presidency" if ever there was one—lasted longer than that of any French head of state since the Second Empire of Louis Bonaparte. By the end it seemed that his sole passion was for power.

What had he supported as a "socialist"? The 1971 PS platform stressed a "rupture with capitalism." Mitterrand reoriented the French left around a neo-Keynesian program of radical, state-driven reforms (expansion of the public sector, widespread nationalizations, income redistribution). This allowed the PS to fashion its 1972 *programme commun*, or alliance with the then powerful and ever Stalinist French Communist Party (PCF). Mitterrand realized that because the PCF was still attracting close to 20 percent of the French vote he would never win the presidency without its support.

The common program with the Communists failed to survive the first two years of Mitterrand's presidency (1981-1983). The Socialists learned that an individual nation-state could not isolate itself from global economic trends. And so the Mitterrand government paid dearly for its initial orgy of state spending and

nationalizations. Indeed, by the end of 1981 inflation was rampant, reaching 14.1 percent. The franc was devalued three times in Mitterrand's first two years.

SO HE REVERSED policy, switching from Keynesianism to monetarism. A "modernization" drive aimed to "streamline" the public sector, despite the fact that civil servants represented the PS's leading electoral constituency. Although Mitterrand arrived in power with a platform that promised full employment and a break with capitalism, France soon underwent draconian austerity measures, a wave of privatizations, and a "break with socialism." The Epinay program had proclaimed that "socialist transformation" sought "not to manage a system *but to replace it with another*."¹ Yet, in a January 1984 television appearance Mitterrand declared that "the French are beginning to understand: it is *the firm* that creates wealth, it is *the firm* that creates employment, it is *the firm* that decides our standard of living and our place in the world hierarchy."² [Emphasis added.] In short, the PS now seemed to pursue a benign version of the marketization strategies that in Anglo-Saxon countries were associated with Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan.

"Europe," or a push for greater European economic and political integration, was the cover under which Mitterrand pursued these reforms. In this way, political responsibility for unpopular economic measures could be blamed on Brussels (the seat of the European Commission). But French socialism's radical change, of course, was not accompanied by any serious philosophical or doctrinal adjustments. Party rhetoric continued to reflect the values represented by the heyday of European social democracy—the so-called "thirty glorious years" from 1945-1975—despite the fact that socialism's traditional class basis had altered radically.

The collapse of communism finally undid socialist *dirigisme*. By the time of Mitterrand's exit from politics in 1995, the country suffered from a structural unemployment rate that hovered around 12 percent. As historian Serge Bernstein has aptly remarked, "All that was left in the wreckage were liberal policies: market

forces, free competition, monetary orthodoxy, a balanced budget without a balance of payments deficit, and an unregulated labor market. The left had completely lost its identity."³ Those who sought to mount a fresh approach, such as the PS's Rocardian wing—advocates of workers' self-management and market socialism—remained marginalized (despite the fact that Rocard served as prime minister from 1988-1991). The consequence was an identity crisis about the very meaning of "socialism." The contradictions of the Mitterrand era finally caught up with the PS in April 2002. Le Pen won 16.9 percent and the PS won 16.2 percent of the vote. Two Trotskyist candidates attracted 10 percent. The Communists registered an anemic 3.3 percent.

In part, the explanation is simple: voters on the left who wished to protest globalization or the tyranny of markets opted for one of the Trotskyists over Jospin. It was little consolation for the PS that Chirac's 19.88 percent total was the worst ever for an incumbent president. The Socialists had to cope with the depressing fact that only 14 percent of its active members were under forty, and adherents over sixty years old make up 40 percent of the party. The PS electoral base is rapidly reaching the age of retirement, and new, younger militants are hard to find.

One irony of the PS's defeat was that Jospin had a relatively good record in office. After the 1993 electoral *débâcle*, he revived the party through a novel "*gauche plurielle*" ("plural left"), that is, a coalition of the PS with the Communists, Greens, and Jean-Pierre Chèvenement's anti-European Citizen's Movement. Jospin restored integrity to the Socialist leadership (there were many scandals in the later Mitterrand years) and instituted a series of progressive economic reforms: the thirty-five hour work week (at no loss of pay) as well as an ambitious youth employment program. He pushed through tough new measures to ensure electoral parity for PS women. Above all, he reduced unemployment. Between 1997 and 2002, joblessness declined from 12.4 percent to 9.1 percent.

Jospin also kept his distance from the "third way" approach proclaimed by fellow European socialists such as Britain's Tony Blair and

Germany's Gerhard Schröder. He remained wedded rhetorically and ideologically to redistributive ideals and paid lip service to antiglobalization rhetoric. Still, he also pursued strategies designed to enhance France's global competitiveness, and this may have proved crucial in his undoing.⁴ Jospin was outflanked on the far left. Some commentators called it the revenge of French socialism's "Marxist super-ego." The French far left has few parallels elsewhere in Europe, and it chastised the PS as "social liberal." In the mean time, Chèvenement, the Greens, and the Communists all ran hard against the PS in the first round of presidential voting, playing directly into the hands of the National Front.

THIS BRINGS US back to Lindenberg's acrimonious book. Viewed through a political-intellectual lens, it appears to be an attempt to settle scores with left-wing intellectuals who positioned themselves to the *left of the established left*. In Lindenberg's view, these figures were indirectly responsible for the 2002 embarrassment. More generally, however, the Lindenberg debate suggests a breakdown of the "anti-totalitarian political consensus" that, for two decades, functioned as the reigning paradigm among French intellectuals.

In the post–World War II decades the term "French exceptionalism" signified the major role the PCF played in national political life—a role that markedly contrasted to other Western European democracies (excepting Italy). Marxism dominated left-leaning French intellectuals. But there was a volteface in the 1970s. Revelations of Pol Pot's "killing fields" were interpreted against the background of the "Solzhenitsyn effect." The publication of *The Gulag Archipelago* in 1974 undermined the French romance with communism. Then the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, coupled with the 1981 declaration of martial law in Poland, and the crushing by Polish communists of the Solidarity movement, appeared to tarnish irremediably Marxism's image among French intellectuals. Havel, Sakharov, and Walesa replaced Marx, Lenin, and Mao in the pantheon.

But this anti-totalitarian consensus began to unravel during the massive December 1995

public sector strikes protesting attempts to restructure France's generous pension system. Journals leaning to social liberalism such as *Esprit* supported the conservative government's retrenchment policy, whereas *Marxisant* intellectuals such as the late Pierre Bourdieu cast their lot with striking workers and chastised globalization. In 1997 Jospin became prime minister under President Jacques Chirac, and it soon became clear that the Socialist response to EU-decreed, anti-inflationary austerity measures differed little from the strategies proposed by the Gaullists.

Left-leaning intellectuals soon concluded that the anti-totalitarian intellectual consensus failed to provide a program for the 1990s. A new mantra was heard: *human rights is not a politics*. This may be true, but a slogan like this seriously underestimated the beneficial change that resulted from acceptance of the anti-totalitarian ethos in the first place. In the 1970s that ethos provided a badly needed exit strategy from all varieties of left-wing dogmatism. Today, some aging *gauchistes* appear to be suffering from political memory loss or they missed the point. The best way to combat the excesses of globalization is not via regression to the homilies of left-wing sectarianism but by extending logics of democratization that rely on human rights as an indispensable safeguard against the dangers of authoritarian political relapse.

POSTSCRIPT: During the summer of 2003, just when it appeared that things couldn't get any worse for the PS, another challenge arose from the anti-globalization movement led by José Bové, spokesman for the *Confédération Paysanne* (Farmers' Confederation). Bové achieved fame in 1999 when he was arrested for bulldozing a McDonald's restaurant under construction in the southern town of Millau. In June 2003 he was arrested again, this time for destroying stocks of genetically modified rice. After two months in prison, Bové was released and immediately staged a back-to-the-land, counter-globalization festival/protest in the Larzac region of southern France. Organizers had anticipated a hundred thousand protesters; according to reliable accounts, twice that

many showed up. Flush with success, Bové, alluding to the unprecedented heat wave (which, according to the latest statistics, was responsible for some 15,000 deaths), warned of a “red-hot” September (*un Septembre brûlant*). His revulsion for the PS—whose exhibit at the Larzac gathering was pointedly “dismantled” by antiglobalization activists—is well known. He disparages the PS as neoliberals and perceives the Jospin ministry as a little more than a Trojan Horse for the International Monetary Fund and backers of the European Monetary Union.

Although the media-savvy Bové has gained considerable notoriety for his neo-Luddite antics, he has been reprimanded recently by fellow protestors for being too camera-friendly. After the McDonald’s incident one of Bové’s longtime allies, ex-Situationist René Riesel, demonstratively broke with him, claiming the *Confédération Paysanne* spokesman had succumbed to “bovémania.” Nor did Bové enhance his credibility as a left-wing advocate when, returning from a visit to the Middle East in spring 2002, he announced on French radio that the Mossad (the Israeli Secret Service) was behind the recent, nationwide attacks on French synagogues and other Jewish sites. Many savor the irony that Bové, the antiglobalization

movement’s poster child, has become an international media celebrity and thus one of global society’s primary beneficiaries. Bové has also been criticized by Doctors Without Borders founder and former PS minister of health Bernard Kouchner—the PS’s most popular and trusted political figure. According to Kouchner, Bové’s knee-jerk populism and anti-parliamentarism are more reminiscent of the tactics and orientation of the nativist political right than the left. Kouchner went so far as to compare Bové’s anti-globalization orientation to that of Pierre Poujade, who during the 1950s led a short-lived smallholder’s revolt against the Fourth Republic.

These criticisms seem to have taken their toll on Bové. He has now announced his intention to resign as spokesman for the *Confédération Paysanne*. For the moment, he represents more of a thorn in the side of the ailing PS than a serious political threat. ●

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1. M. Maclean, ed., *The Mitterrand Years* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), p. 51.

2. H. Machin and V. Wright, *Economic Policy and Policy-Making under the Mitterrand Presidency 1981-1984* (London: Frances Pinter, 1985), p. 3.

3. Serge Bernstein, “The Crisis of the Left and the Return of the Republican Model,” in *The Mitterrand Years*, p. 82.

4. See Philip H. Gordon and Sophie Meunier, *The French Challenge: Adapting to Globalization* (Washington, D.C., The Brookings Institution, 2001).

Left without a Clue

Latin American Intellectuals and the Economy

Forrest D. Colburn

I ASKED A THOUGHTFUL Brazilian businessman what he thought of the U.S. reaction to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. He said, "It's not ridiculous, but it is exaggerated." Many in Latin America share the sentiment. There is unease throughout the region about how obsessed the colossus to the north is with Central Asia, the Middle East, and issues of "security." There is even, perhaps, a longing for the country of old described by President Calvin Coolidge: "The business of America is business."

After being pummeled by recession and the burden of foreign debt in the 1980s, all Latin American countries (even, in its own peculiar way, Cuba) opened their economies to the play of market forces. In the ensuing decade—the 1990s—economic growth resumed. But 2000 was the end of growth. Indeed, according to the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL) in 2001 and 2002 the economy of the region contracted. And 2003 was another tough year. Latin Americans are not sure what comes next or just what they should do to propel their economies forward.

The intellectual puzzle in Latin America is why the countries of the region are not growing. All, or almost all, the reputed barriers to economic growth—from state enterprises to subsidies to ruinous tariffs—have been removed. Natural resources abound; the labor force is young and energetic; economies are linked to the world economy. Why is there no "take-off"? The Venezuelan economist Ricardo Hausmann, now teaching at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, shrugs his shoulders: "Economists have discredited many potential hypotheses . . . the

truth is we still don't know what leads to economic growth." Still, as he acknowledges, economic growth is all-important for the region. Wages are low because of weak—or insufficient—demand for labor. In many countries, too, the labor force is growing rapidly. In Mexico, for example, more than two million Mexicans enter the labor force every year. Growth is needed to generate employment, stimulate wage increases, and produce the resources needed to combat poverty and inequality.

The behavior of newly elected presidents in Latin America is shaped by three factors: (1) the perceived "bequest" they have received—their sense as to whether or not the economy has been well managed by their predecessors; (2) the discipline of the financial markets; and (3) reigning ideas about how to stimulate growth—or promote more equitable growth. Venezuela's president, Hugo Chávez, concluded that he had inherited a pitiful country, and he has run roughshod over it, all the more so because oil revenues free him from dependence on international bankers. In contrast, Brazil's president, Luiz Inácio "Lula" da Silva, concluded that his predecessor, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, did a reasonable job, and that he is dependent on the goodwill of the international financial community. Although both Chávez and da Silva are considered critics of liberalism—of free markets—neither of them, in fact, has an alternative. Chávez rants against the "private sector" and praises the country's "liberator" from colonialism, Simón Bolívar (long dead). But he has no idea how to stimulate economic growth. His colleague da Silva is more thoughtful and more measured in his words, but he, too, is bereft of specific proposals. Elsewhere, charismatic politicians have been elected who are disdainful of the status quo and who project an image of caring about the frustrations and needs of

the poor majority, including Alejandro Toledo in Peru, Lucio Gutiérrez in Ecuador, and Néstor Kirchner in Argentina. These leaders are all sometimes called “left-leaning.” But this description is misleading; it suggests more than a symbolic identification with the poor. In fact, these presidents have no readily identifiable program that distinguishes them. When it comes to management of the economy, they simply don’t know what to do.

Latin American presidents who are commonly referred to as right-of-center, such as Vicente Fox in Mexico, Francisco Flores in El Salvador, and Álvaro Uribe in Colombia, also have no substantial ideas about how to stimulate economic growth in either their individual countries or in Latin America at large. The private sector of the countries of Latin America, from mammoth Brazil to the island state of the Dominican Republic, is organized by type of economic activity, in what are called “chambers” (*cámaras*). But these organizations are also not producing new ideas about economic stimulation. Indeed, individual business leaders are silent when asked, “If you were given \$50 million, where would you invest it?”

Social unrest forced Bolivia’s president, Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, to resign on October 17, 2003. Since 2000, angry mobs have forced out of office three other Latin American presidents: Jamil Mahuad of Ecuador, Alberto Fujimori of Peru, and Fernando de la Rúa of Argentina. In all of these cases it was only clear to whom the mobs were directing their ire—*el señor presidente*. Alternative public policies, including strategies for promoting economic development, have not emerged from the streets of La Paz, Quito, Lima, Buenos Aires, or elsewhere. The region’s universities are quiet, too. There is a quandary in Latin America, shared by all: given the limp response to economic liberalization, what now? What next?

Some believe markets—and market forces—have yet to be given a chance, that there are, in fact, still substantial barriers hindering the creativity of entrepreneurs and firms. Luis Miguel Pando, the director of Mexico’s private sector advisory board (CCE), for example, asserts that economic reforms are urgently needed in four areas: fiscal (government revenue and spending), energy (still

largely dominated by the state), labor, and the structure and performance of the Mexican state (elephantine and sluggish). For him, as for President Fox, opposition to these reforms represents nothing more than “a brake on change.” Pando dismisses criticism of economic liberalism, arguing that, if asked, 99 percent of Mexicans could not even define it. If growth does not resume in Mexico, he says, the country’s presidential elections in 2006 could result in a “Lula-type” victor.

More common in Latin America is the perception that economic liberalism has been tried and that the results have been meager. The harshest criticism is directed toward privatization schemes, which frequently have been tarnished by corruption, including the diversion of funds earned from the sale of state assets to party election campaigns. Other economic reforms are criticized simply because they have not produced the promised results. Consumers have been happy to buy the torrent of imported goods that have accompanied the lowering of tariffs. Almost everywhere, exports have increased but not kept up with the surge in imports. Depending on the country, foreign investment (as, until recently, in Argentina) or remittances (as in El Salvador) have closed the balance of payments gap. What concerns Latin Americans, though, is the net effect of this economic activity on employment and income. And for the last few years the results have been anemic. Criticism is heaped upon those in political office—and on the reigning economic model.

A THIRD, ESPECIALLY depressing interpretation is that it is the health of the world economy, in particular, commodity prices and capital flows from rich countries, that overwhelmingly determine economic growth in Latin America. For reasons that remain elusive, the economy of the region does appear to be more cyclical than the economies of, for example, the United States and the European Union. Latin America may, in fact, have the most suitable economic model, but be whipsawed by the slowdown in the United States, Europe, and Japan. Perhaps there is nothing to be done about the slow economic performance of Latin America except to wait

for better times abroad. But who can be sure? And, anyway, who has the patience?

Dismal macro-economic statistics mask individual hardship. CEPAL has a gloomy indicator: percentage of households mired in poverty. The organization estimates that from 1945-1980, some 35 percent of Latin American households were poor. During the 1980s, the figure rose to 41 percent, though the triumph of political and economic liberalism brought a small decline in poverty in the 1990s—to the still unacceptable figure of 38 percent. In 2002, CEPAL claims, 49 percent of households were caught in poverty. The figures are only estimates, but they give a credible sense of trends. And even the middle class in Latin America is threatened by wobbly economic performance; this is, after all, a region where it is quipped that if you crash your car, you exit the middle class.

Poor economic performance also has political consequences. A comprehensive survey of attitudes on government and politics in seventeen Latin American countries by Barómetro Latinoamericano, a private polling organization based in Chile, revealed that in 2002 only a third of Latin Americans expressed satisfaction with their country's democracy. A higher figure, 56 percent of those surveyed, agreed with the assertion that democracy is preferable to any other form of government, leaving doubts about the other half of the population that seemingly would not object to an authoritarian form of government. The survey also revealed a low level of confidence in the all-important institutions of democracy: political parties, congress, judiciary, and the government/president.

PUBLIC DISAPPOINTMENT with Latin America's democracies has many roots, including the perception of widespread and egregious corruption and the lackluster performance of many state bureaucracies. However, it is widely acknowledged, including by political leaders, that poor economic performance is crucial in generating disappointment with governments, and even with democracy itself. A former member of Costa Rica's Congress, who has also served as a cabinet minister, told me in the privacy of his home

that the central political problem of the region's democracies is the economic model of liberalism. He explained: "Political parties and political leaders have invested enormous political resources in the implementation of this model, and it just has not delivered the expected results, leading the public to conclude that politicians are incompetent—and even deceptive—and that democracy as a form of government is flawed." Many influential Latin Americans share his assessment.

Not knowing what to make of economic liberalism's less than robust performance is politically debilitating. It is often remarked that there is no democracy without political parties. But can political parties exist without ideology, without even ideas? Isn't at least a measure of ideological contestation necessary to shape—and stimulate—public policy? Throughout Latin America it appears that believers in liberalism have lost their fervor, their drive. Liberal reforms have lost their momentum as much from the loss of a "push" as from opposition. And, although there are critics of liberalism, no one right now has an alternative—resulting in a tired intellectual moment in the history of the region.

There are considerable political risks in this intellectual vacuum. One major risk comes from charismatic charlatans offering simple solutions—or easily targeted scapegoats. Hugo Chávez, clad in his Brioni suits, is revealing when he says that although he dislikes the United States, there is something admirable from the United States: "*The Simpsons*." Chávez is the Bart Simpson of Venezuela, taunting and provoking the upper class. But to what end? What's the plan? In Caracas at the end of 2000, 11,539 businesses filed tax returns. In 2002, 5,200 tax returns were filed. Another thousand firms are estimated to have disappeared in the first half of 2003. The country's private sector is collapsing. Correspondingly, the number of unemployed in the country has tripled in the last few years. This rout is not an alternative to liberalism.

If political parties are not tied to ideas, to visions of state and society, it becomes all the easier for political parties to be dominated by individuals or small groups, hungry for the perks of power. Latin America's present ab-

sence of intellectual debate, with identifiable differences of opinion about economic development among political actors, has surely retarded the renovation of the region's political parties, facilitating their dominance by individuals who long ago should have left the political stage. Most emblematic are two presidential candidates in neighboring El Salvador and Guatemala: seventy-three-year-old Shafik Handal, an orthodox communist, *ex-comandante* of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front in El Salvador, and seventy-seven-year-old Efraín Ríos Montt, who as a general, came to the presidency of Guatemala on the heels of a military coup in 1982. No one even bothers asking these men what their ideas are about how to stimulate economic activity. Where in Latin America are the new leaders, with fresh but sober ideas, to propel the region forward?

A good starting place for new thinking about Latin America's economic development is a thorough review of the experience of economic liberalism. It is important to understand why certain countries—such as Chile—have fared better than other countries—including, prominently, Argentina—and why other countries—such as Ecuador—never really got a chance to put the doctrine into practice. Just as useful are analyses of “winners” and “losers” within individual countries. Which sectors of the economy have fared well and which sec-

tors have stumbled? Who is competitive in the ferocious world economy and who is not? What kinds of partnership between the state and the private sector are most fruitful? What social groups have prospered and what groups have suffered? Empirical research can be tedious, but economic paradigms not grounded in local realities are dangerous. There ought to be a wide range of arguments about how to interpret, implement, and criticize economic liberalism, and about how to ameliorate poverty and inequality—sufficient to fuel a healthy intellectual debate. But where are the arguments?

The benefits of economic liberalism were surely “oversold” politically; too much was promised, and too quickly. Moreover, the vision of how economic liberalism works—the infamous “invisible hand”—was conveniently simplified, leaving governors with the facile conclusion that they only had to offer their citizens a sound currency and—poof!—individual self-interest and initiative would lead to prosperity. But nothing in Latin America (or anywhere else) is so easy. What to do now? Unless or until a new economic paradigm emerges, it is urgent to perfect what is at hand, with thoughtfulness and creativity. A rebound in the economy of the United States wouldn't hurt, either. ●

FORREST D. COLBURN's most recent book is *Latin America at the End of Politics*.

To Our Contributors

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THE EDITORS

Fear, Hope, and Wishful Thinking in Brazil

Matias Vernengo

IN A CERTAIN developing country, a distinguished senator from the northeast wrote with visible anguish a letter to his friends regarding the recent election and the expected arrival to the capital of a popular leader. In his view the president-elect lacked culture and education, and his election represented the first real test of the democratic institutions in his country. He noted that “nobody knows what he will do when he does come My opinion is that when he comes he will bring a breeze with him. Which way it will blow, I cannot tell. . . . My fear is bigger than my hope.” The population, on the other hand, was all hope, no fear.

I am, it should be clear, referring to the United States. The senator was Daniel Webster, and the newly elected president was Andrew Jackson. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., argued in his classic history of the period that Jackson contributed to the vitality of American democracy. However, it is also true that his macroeconomic policies—guided by his hatred of banks, public debt, paper money, and federal intervention—contributed to the most serious economic crisis since independence. It took a whole century before progressives were able to promote in the economic arena the values that Jackson represented in politics.

Luis Inácio Lula da Silva said that his election represented the victory in Brazil of hope over fear. He might have spoken too soon. He may turn out to be not all that different from Jackson if his macroeconomic policies are not reversed soon. It may seem premature to draw this parallel. Progressive men and women around the globe—like most Americans after Jackson’s election—are more hopeful than fearful. And there are good reasons for that, as Stanley Gacek reminded us in his recent article

in this magazine (“New Hope for Brazil? Spring 2003). Lula himself during the campaign—and, as president, at the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre—promised to provide an alternative to the neoliberal policies that dominate the corporate-led globalization process.

His commitment to reducing inequalities, eliminating poverty, and promoting a more civilized society are unquestionable, as José Eisenberg also argued in this magazine (“Governing Brazil: New Challenges for the Left,” Summer 2003). But the problem is that the PT has more fear of financial markets than hope in its own ability to turn the economy around.

During the campaign, international financial markets put a lot of pressure on the Brazilian electorate. The world’s most celebrated currency speculator, George Soros, in an interview with the *Folha de São Paulo*, one of Brazil’s leading newspapers, argued bluntly that Brazil would not be allowed to elect Lula. Later he argued that as long as Lula led the polls, and even more should he win, the Brazilian *real* would be under speculative attack. In fact, the pressure began even before the election. The *real* depreciated from less than three to slightly more than four per dollar in the months before Brazilians voted (Latin Americans quote exchange rates upside down, that is, the domestic price of foreign currency, hence going up indicates a depreciating foreign exchange). José Serra, outgoing president Fernando Henrique Cardoso’s candidate, blamed the depreciation on Lula’s populist promises.

Lula and his advisers argued instead that the problem lay with the liberalization policies of Cardoso’s administration—in particular, with the reckless accumulation of foreign debt and the increasing external vulnerability of the Brazilian economy. This diagnosis was and still is essentially correct. During the 1990s, the foreign debt to gross domestic product level rose to the levels of the 1980s debt crisis, and exports—the only reliable source of foreign re-

serves—stagnated. Hence the country was ever more dependent on the inflows of foreign capital to close the balance of payments. Some depreciation was, in fact, seen as good, because it would reduce the current account deficits.

HOWEVER, AS SOON as the PT took over, Lula appointed Antonio Palocci, a politician with no economic background, and Henrique Meirelles, an ex-president of Fleet Boston, to the Ministry of Finance and the Central Bank respectively. Their associates were chosen from a group of conservative economists from the Getulio Vargas Foundation and the Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro, both groups with ties in the Cardoso administration. One of them—the secretary of economic policy, Marcos Lisboa—had written the government program for another candidate, with the collaboration of José Scheinkman, a former chair of the economics department at Chicago University. The economists usually associated with the PT ended up in the Planning Ministry and the National Development Bank (BNDES), with considerably less impact on the direction of macroeconomic policy.

The initial measures of the new economic team were more in line with Serra's views than with what Lula defended during the campaign. The base interest rate was hiked to 26.5 percent—it has been falling at a snail's pace since then—and the target primary surplus increased to 4.25 percent of GDP (when the International Monetary Fund itself only demanded 3.75 percent). These measures have led, on the positive side, to a decrease in the gap between interest on Brazilian bonds and U.S. Treasury bonds—the so-called “country risk”—and also to a considerable appreciation of the *real*. (This is not very good for exports, but it is a central instrument for keeping inflation under control.) The results have been acclaimed by the government as proof that Lula and the PT do not frighten international financial markets anymore. One should add, however, that they also prove how much the financial markets frighten the administration.

As André Gunder Frank has recently remarked, the problem with the current macroeconomic policy is that it will make land reform and the hunger program very difficult to carry out. The policy also makes it impossible to reduce the

record current levels of unemployment: 12.9 percent in October. For those on the left who have converted to fiscal conservatism—the idea that budget surpluses are good even in recessions—one should note that Brazil has had fiscal surpluses for more than a decade. From 1990 to 2002, Brazil had on average a primary fiscal surplus (excluding payments of interest on outstanding debt) of 2.3 percent of GDP. Note also that most developed countries are able to pursue counter-cyclical fiscal and monetary policies. The United States and most Western European countries are currently running deficits and have low interest rates. Brazil has done exactly the opposite despite growing unemployment.

Brazil is running a nominal fiscal deficit (including interest payments) close to 5 percent of GDP. The difference between the nominal and the primary deficit is made up of interest payments, which, if the administration does not miss the IMF target, will amount to almost 10 percent of GDP. One may complain about deficits being run to finance a permanent war on a vaguely defined enemy, as in the American case. But that is being done by a Republican administration; progressives cannot be blamed. The Workers' Party is running deficits to pay interest rates.

Interest is paid to debt holders, for the most part, banks, corporations, and wealthy individuals. Hence, this is a highly regressive redistribution of income, in a country with one of the world's worst records on income distribution. Regressive distribution is also contractionary, because wealthy individuals spend proportionally less of their incomes. The fiscal gains recently reaped from a very costly reform of social security pale in comparison to the financial costs imposed by the high interest rates. (Fifty percent of the Brazilian public debt is indexed to the base rate; so when the Central Bank hikes interest rates, Treasury pays the bill).

Around two hundred economists—some with long-term ties to the PT—have recently signed a document demanding a clean break with the current macroeconomic policies. The document was written under the coordination of Plínio de Arruda Sampaio Jr., son of a former congressman and a prominent PT figure. Other dissenters have been expelled from the party—including three representatives and a senator.

A petition on behalf of Senator Heloisa Helena—signed by Noam Chomsky, Michael Albert, and Robin Blackburn among others—and the support of several members of the party have been ignored. Chico de Oliveira, a founding member and key intellectual, has officially left the PT. The impact has been nil, and a long tradition of tolerance with dissenters has been disregarded. In an administration that is already paralyzed by fear of financial markets' reaction, radical changes on macroeconomic policies are seen as mortal sins. Lula and his advisers have repeated several times that there is no Plan B, no alternative to the current policies. Further, Lula said in an interview to *Veja*—a prestigious weekly magazine—referring to the internal criticism from PT affiliates and sympathizers, that it is good to have them against him because they show the path not to be followed.

There is a fine line between hope and wishful thinking. Stanley Gacek tells us, quite correctly, that IMF and Wall Street pressure for “fiscal responsibility” could spell disaster. However, he believes that several factors are working in Brazil's favor; namely, the World Bank has praised some progressive policies, and Wall Street may have learned some lessons from the Argentinean debacle. José Eisenberg tells us that we should be patient; it is still too early to pass judgment on Lula's administration. This seems to be wishful thinking.

Hope should be built on a foundation of reasonable expectations. Patience is necessary when economic policies are on the right track. Even if the World Bank and the IMF learned something about their failures, which is quite possible, and praised some Brazilian policies, which they did, this is not enough to ground our hopes. High interest rates, permanent fiscal adjustment, and appreciated currencies were wrong during the Cardoso administration, and we would be helping the people of Brazil to say that they are still wrong. Patience will not help change those policies.

To avoid making Daniel Webster's phrase, that there are more reasons to be fearful than hopeful, my own, let me try to be constructive and explain why we can still be (somewhat) optimistic. Brazilian foreign policy has been less attuned to the conservative agenda that still impregnates domestic economic policies.

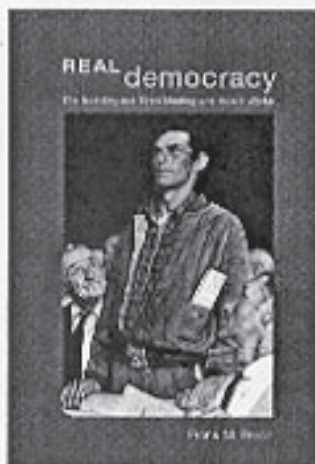
Brazilian leadership was essential in the formation of the G-X group—the group of developing countries with a fluctuating number of participants led by Brazil, China, and India—that put a stick in the wheels of the World Trade Organization meeting in Cancún. Further, Brazilian intervention was crucial in the negotiations for a more just Free Trade Area of the Americas. In domestic matters there is still some possibility for change. All investment expenditures of public firms in Brazil are accounted as part of the government's expenses—something that is not done in developed countries. Effectively this means that the ability of public firms to invest—particularly in infrastructure—is radically restricted. The IMF has indicated that it might be willing to allow a different accounting policy. And investments in infrastructure usually have a crowding-in effect, leading to higher levels of private investment. Also, Argentina has just imposed capital controls—a measure taken by others (Chile, Colombia, and Malaysia to name a few) with relative success. Here, too, the IMF has acknowledged that the record of financial liberalization has been rather poor, and even the *Economist* in its “Survey of Global Finance” admits that some countries should impose capital controls. Because Brazil already requires that all foreign exchange transactions above a certain amount be reported to the central bank, capital controls would not require an increase in bureaucracy. This may help the Brazilian authorities move in that direction.

These measures require little institutional change. They would also allow for increasing domestic demand, and reduced interest rates together with a reasonably depreciated but stable exchange rate would lead to the sustainable growth that has eluded Brazil for the last twenty years. But there is no indication that the administration is moving in this direction. It may very well take another generation of progressives to make Brazil a more just and civilized society. Hope springs eternal. ●

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Democracy in America, 2003

Sean Wilentz

Over the past ten years, there has been a growing gap in perception over the state of American democracy. The vast majority of the Washington press corps—including many pundits critical of the Bush administration—is inclined to see what has happened (and is happening) as basically hard-knuckled politics as usual. The fights may sound harsher, the media blare may be much louder, the reigning politics may be more conservative than anyone expected—but the basic institutions of American democracy are, supposedly, secure. Those like economist and *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman who disagree, and who see something more dangerous unfolding, are branded as wild radicals, or paranoids, or both—and, as Krugman has mordantly observed, they receive the wild hate mail and e-mails that prove it.

There is, of course, always a danger of paranoia setting in at a time of intense polarization, when one political party controls all three branches of the federal government—all the more so when that party in charge looks less like the usual coalition of internally contending forces than a disciplined army. Such is certainly the case today, especially in Washington, where a virtually unanimous Republican Party—the House Republicans whipped into shape by Majority Leader Tom DeLay, the Senate Republicans only slightly less unified, both houses well coordinated with the adamant Bush White House, and the Rehnquist Court standing by as the final forum—makes the Democratic minority look like a chorus of scorched cats. But isn't this just the result of the Republicans' superior political skills—playing the rules of the game to the utmost, always keeping their eyes on their prizes?

The Republicans' occasional failures—notably, in the fights over a few high-profile federal judiciary appointments, including that of Miguel Estrada—suggest that democracy still works well enough, that Madisonian checks and balances are still checking and balancing. Those failures even suggest that grassroots opposition organizing can still have some impact in national politics. If only the Democrats would consistently get their act together (so the argument goes), if only they could take advantage of the fact that the public supports their positions on leading issues, if only they could field a candidate with forceful credentials on foreign policy and the military (hence, the instant initial boom for General Wesley Clark), then the political scene would look very different.

Some of this is plausible, some of this is true, but all of it misses that something truly worrisome is happening here—a clear and present danger to democracy, posed by the leadership of the Republican Party. In his latest book, *The Great Unraveling*, Krugman charges that the current Republican regime is not “conservative” or even normal within the customary boundaries of American politics: it is controlled by abnormal radicals, who will stop at nothing to impose their right-wing ideology on the country. The origins of that abnormality long predate the younger Bush presidency or even the struggle over Florida in 2000. Its successes have already done great damage to our institutions.

A more leisurely occasion would permit a longer historical look at the rise of this modern antidemocratic impulse, stretching back at least to the McCarthy era.¹ Let us go back just as far as the mid-1990s and the stalled Gingrich revolution. In 1994, amid the Republican recouping of Congress, speaker-to-be Newt Gingrich inspired his troops with instructions to demonize the Democrats in no uncer-

tain terms. Democrats were “anti-flag,” “anti-family,” “decadent,” “sick”—not adversaries, but hateful enemies. It would take Ann Coulter until 2003 to bring Gingrich’s strategy to its logical conclusion by writing a best-selling screed that indicted all liberals as traitors and rehabilitated both the smears and the reputation of “Tailgunner Joe” McCarthy. But Newt was there first.

Gingrich’s slash-and-burn politics bespoke a larger crisis for the country—and for the Republican Party. After the landslide elections of Ronald Reagan and the elder George Bush, it became an article of faith in some Republican circles that the White House would forever belong to the G.O.P.—and that it was only a matter of time before Congress would as well. Then, in 1992, something terrible happened: Bill Clinton defeated Bush. Some astonished Republicans blamed the reversal on the oddball candidacy of Ross Perot (although, in fact, polling at the time showed that Perot cost Clinton and Bush about the same). By that quirk alone, Republicans regarded Clinton, with his 42 percent of the popular vote, not just as unfortunate but as illegitimate. Add to that Clinton’s background—a sixties antiwar student, at once Arkansas “white trash” and an Oxford-Yale elitist, a white Southerner who felt perfectly at home with black people, a husband with an ambitious, professional wife—and he loomed as a kind of anti-Christ of what Republican leader Representative Henry Hyde would years later call “this culture war we’re involved in.” Some Republicans went so far as to say that Clinton was not their president. And their attacks would get a lot worse.

THE 1994 mid-term elections were supposed to mark the great return to Republican partisan normalcy. The Clinton administration had bungled its health care initiative; the Gingrich forces took full advantage of Democratic divisions by firing up their troops (fueled by huge infusions of special interest money); and, in the aftermath of the Republican landslide, Clinton was reduced to claiming that the White House was “still relevant” to American politics. But then the Gingrich Revolution failed, chiefly because of Clinton’s political adroitness. After major

events such as the government shutdown and small displays of (as it happened, fabricated) pique over seating arrangements on Air Force One, Gingrich crashed and burned. And so, in 1996, did the Republican presidential campaign, as the hapless Bob Dole, who seemed to have no reason for running other than that it was his turn on the Republican go-round, went down to defeat—with no big Perot vote to blame anymore. The G.O.P. vision of normalcy suddenly vanished. Clinton had won again. Into the breach stepped a new crop of radicals, concentrated on Capitol Hill but with powerful allies in the media (including the new Fox News), on K Street, and in corporate suites and law offices all around the country. It was not a single vast conspiracy; it was a congeries of operatives, muckrakers, and ideologues with a common allegiance to the Republican Party—and to making sure that normalcy would be restored, forever and ever, amen, by any means necessary.

Thereafter began the radical and continuing Republican assault, not simply on Democrats and liberals but on the political system itself—using whatever political and constitutional tools are at hand and twisting them to ensure what Tom DeLay and his colleagues foresee as a millennium of one-party rule. The highlights (or lowlights) have included the following:

- **The Clinton Impeachment, 1998-1999:** After spending millions of dollars and failing to come up with evidence of wrongdoing by the Clintons, the partisan Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr sprung a perjury trap that gave him a pretext to investigate the president’s sex life. After Starr and his office spent ten months in further investigation (at a cost to the taxpayers of tens of millions of dollars more), the public remained unmoved, and the Democrats actually picked up seats in the off-year elections. Yet House Republicans continued their impeachment drive anyway, hoping to remove the supposedly illegitimate Clinton from office with political pressure—and finally impeached him thanks to what Sidney Blumenthal, in his book *The Clinton Wars*, documents as a full-scale effort by the House leadership to intimidate wavering members. The Senate acquitted Clinton by a wide con-

stitutional margin—but by impeaching a president on matters that fell well below the constitutional bar of “high crimes and misdemeanors,” the Republican effort did as-yet untold damage to the U.S. Constitution.

- **Florida, 2000:** With the 2000 presidential election turning on the tight race in Florida, the Republicans mobilized flying squads of official congressional aides (including some from De Lay’s office) to intimidate voting officials. One G.O.P. squad conducted what Paul Gigot of the *Wall Street Journal* referred to gleefully as a “bourgeois riot” and shut down the recounting of votes in Miami-Dade County, a turning point in the drama. Amid the battle, it was revealed that Florida secretary of state Katherine Harris, a Sarasota Republican, had systematically removed eligible black voters from the polling lists—a procedure called “scrubbing” that was plainly a ploy to suppress the Democratic vote. Subsequently, the Rehnquist Court, led by Justice Antonin Scalia, halted all vote recounting, overrode the Florida Supreme Court’s rulings on its own state constitution, and, in a bitterly divided five to four decision in *Bush v. Gore*, effectively handed the Republicans the election. Although the decision was crafted in ways that precluded its use as a precedent, it marked the most outrageous political intervention by the Court since the *Dred Scott* decision in 1857.

- **The Iraq War and Disinformation, 2002-2003:** In arguing the case for going to war against Iraq, the Bush administration made numerous false claims to the Congress, the American people, and the world about Saddam Hussein’s imminent threat against the United States. There were strong reasons to justify a war on Hussein, especially if undertaken in cooperation with the United Nations and America’s European allies. Instead, the Bush administration chose a go-it-(virtually)-alone strategy based on cooked intelligence reports. The damage to American democracy was severe. By forcing the Central Intelligence Agency to provide false and tendentious reports, the administration (especially Vice President Dick Cheney) undermined the essential independence required of executive agencies if they are to provide objective information to the White House. More important, the admin-

istration knowingly provided this false and tendentious intelligence information to Congress in order to obtain support for the resolution approving the American intervention. Such misinformation mongering was not unprecedented. (President James K. Polk was disingenuous about the events that triggered the war with Mexico, as was Lyndon Johnson about the events in the Gulf of Tonkin.) But never before has an administration attempted such a sustained and grandiose deception of Congress over taking the decision to go to war. Unless the White House is called to account, irreparable damage will have been done to the already weakened eleventh clause of Article I, section 8 of the Constitution, giving the Congress the sole power to declare war.

- **2002 Elections:** In the most blatant efforts at voter suppression since the Jim Crow era, Republicans attempted to expand on their “scrubbing” efforts in Florida of two years earlier. Much of the suppression was aimed at black voters. In Florida’s Miami-Dade county, site of the 2000 mob violence, a shadowy G.O.P. group backing Governor Jeb Bush tried to pack the polling places with hundreds of its own intimidating overseers. The effort was explicitly racial, and was blocked only at the last minute by a local judge. But no court could head off a telemarketing scheme (one of many that the Republicans mounted around the nation in 2002) that instructed Florida’s disproportionately black Democratic voters to cast their absentee ballots after election day—at which point they would no longer be counted. Other voter suppression efforts turned up in New Hampshire, Maryland, Louisiana, Texas, and Michigan. In Washington, Majority Leader De Lay organized something he called STOMP, the Strategic Taskforce for the Organization and Mobilization of People. De Lay and his aides’ possible involvement in voter suppression efforts in districts across the country went uninvestigated.²

In addition, Republican campaigns stooped to levels even lower than the oft-criticized “Willie Horton” ad campaign on behalf of George H.W. Bush in 1988, masterminded by Lee Atwater. The most outrageous campaign was run against Senator Max Cleland in Georgia. Cleland, who lost three limbs in combat

in Vietnam, was portrayed as soft on national security, and placed in ads that also featured Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein—this despite the fact that Cleland was one of the original sponsors in the Senate of homeland security legislation, at a time when the Bush White House opposed it.

• **Redistricting in Colorado and Texas, 2003:** In both Colorado and Texas, Republican-dominated state legislatures, unsatisfied with the congressional redistricting approved in light of the 2000 Census, managed to bulldoze through second partisan redistricting plans far more favorable to the Republican Party. In Texas, Democratic lawmakers fled the state to avoid permitting a quorum when the bill came before special sessions called by G.O.P. governor Rick Perry—and Republican officials called on the new federal Department of Homeland Security for assistance in rounding up the dissenters. Majority Leader DeLay, from Sugarland, played a major role in plotting and executing the Texas redistricting. Normally, legislatures permit themselves to draw new district lines once a decade. The Colorado and Texas partisan assaults, by finding a loophole in state laws, defied that practice and have opened up the strong possibility of never-ending redistricting wars at the state level—provided, of course, that the Republicans do not simply establish one-party power in the states, which is their plain intention. “One bite of the redistricting apple has been the norm for a century, and only if the courts demand revisions do you go back to the drawing board,” Thomas Mann of the centrist Brookings Institution said of the redistricting gambits. “If Colorado and Texas are allowed to stand, I don’t see what’s to stop the process from continuing every election throughout a decade. The idea of relatively permanent, stable districts could vanish.”

• **Recall in California, 2003:** The California recall was the result of a G.O.P. -manufactured perfect political storm. First, in 2001, electricity shortages caused by the efforts of giant energy companies to manipulate the market led to a brownout crisis in California. The chief malefactor was the Enron Corporation, whose CEO, Kenneth Lay, is a close friend and large political contributor to George W. Bush. Yet by

carefully massaging the story, the Bush White House managed to deflect criticism and blame away from its political cronies and toward California’s Democratic governor, Gray Davis. At the time, White House political guru Karl Rove was quoted as expressing his delight that Bush family friend Arnold Schwarzenegger might wind up winning the governor’s mansion in Sacramento in 2002. But Schwarzenegger did not run. The right-wing novice Bill Simon (with backhand aid from the Davis forces) won the Republican primary, and the Democrat Davis was reelected.

REPUBLICANS IN California and Washington were nearly as outraged at Davis’s victory as they had been at Bill Clinton’s. So they cooked up a fresh political crisis. By California law, a two-thirds majority in the state legislature is required to pass a state budget. Although in the minority, Republican California legislators were thereby able to block any budget agreement. Governor Davis, a lackluster personality but competent governor, took the blame.

The stage was already set for Davis’s overthrow. Seizing upon once democratic but now archaic recall laws, Republicans, led by the multimillionaire right-wing congressman Darrell Issa, funded a massive petition campaign to force Davis’s removal from office. Issa originally hoped to become Davis’s replacement, but that was not in the G.O.P. master plan. Once the requisite numbers of signatures were gained, Republican hopefuls—including Issa, Bill Riordan, and Peter Ueberroth—mysteriously dropped out of the race. The last big-name Republican standing was—yes—Karl Rove’s favorite, Arnold Schwarzenegger, bothered only by a pesky Republican to his right, state legislator Tom McClintock.

Before the election, Davis took a combination of steps that reduced the state’s deficit from \$38 billion to about \$9 billion—a figure in the same ballpark with the shortfalls of other major states, thanks to the depressed economy and the Bush tax cuts. Yet the Republicans, with the help of a credulous media, kept repeating the \$38 billion figure right up to recall election day. Davis, a poor campaigner, was further hampered by a feud with his lieutenant

ant governor, Cruz Bustamente, who entered the lists of replacement gubernatorial candidates. Schwarzenegger, saying as little as possible about the issues, won handily, although with considerably less than a popular majority. The recall process—originally implemented to oust governors guilty of gross corruption in office—had become the vehicle for a right-wing hit job of the first magnitude.

THERE IS A desperate quality to these partisan attacks on and manipulations of democratic processes. Perhaps the Republicans, understanding that current demographic trends work heavily against them, are trying to shore up as much as they can politically before it is too late.³ Or, more likely, they are trying to alter the basic rules of politics to offset those trends. As things stand, the existing senatorial and Electoral College systems already give the Republicans an enormous artificial advantage in national politics, by inflating the power of small conservative states in the Deep South and the Mountain West. But seeing the demographic writing on the wall—especially in Texas and Florida, crucial states where trends favor the Democrats—the Republicans may simply have decided to change the rules some more in their favor, without hav-

ing to go through the arduous process of obtaining new constitutional amendments.

Whatever the motivation, the Republicans' partisan assault on democracy displays a will to power unlike any seen in our country since the fire-eater secessionist movement of the 1850s that led to the creation of the southern Confederacy. In 1856, the antidemocratic secessionist Robert Barnwell Rhett bellowed that "a complete revolution" had turned the federal government into "a sheer despotism," which could only be overcome by denying the national will by any means necessary—including disunion. The current Republican Party has no need for secessionism (although its pandering to racist Confederate sensibilities in the South has long been one of its key political weapons). What it shares with the fire-eaters is an implacable will to dominate and a combination of cynicism and contempt for our democratic constitutional procedures. This is not hard-knuckled politics as usual. It is radical and abnormal. It has already degraded American democracy. And it portends a crisis in our politics as great as any since the era of Reconstruction. ●

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1. I have tried to write a small piece of this history with respect to one aspect of modern antidemocratic politics—the invention and development of the pseudo-scandal—in "Will Pseudo-Scandals Decide the Election?" *The American Prospect*, vol. 11, no. 21, September 24, 2000 - October 2, 2000.

2. See my essay, "Jim Crow, Republican Style: Voter Suppression in 2002," in Andrew Cuomo, ed., *Crossroads: The Future of American Politics* (Random House, 2003).

3. On these trends, see John B. Judis and Ruy Teixeira, *The Emerging Democratic Majority* (Scribner, 2002).

The Disappearing Underground

David Bromwich

WHEN I WAS fourteen and fifteen, I used to ride my bike three miles to a bookshop run by people whom I thought of vaguely as beatniks. The owner was a man in his late twenties, dark-haired, bearded, scholastically gaunt. Most often, he sat reading a book on a stool by the cash register. Sometimes when he was gone his wife minded the shop, or else his mother—a friendly woman with a Russian accent and proud of her son. The family could be overheard talking on the phone once in a while, about books and music and other things (what were “Provos”?). It wasn’t brightly lit, and the absence of glare, the occasional phone calls, the aroma from many cups of tea lent the place a disheveled intimacy. One never saw more than two persons there at a time, and people came to converse as much as to buy or browse. The Dialogue Book Shop was its name; and there must have been a dozen like it around Los Angeles. It is not imaginable that any of these shops exists today—for reasons I think are worth going into.

They carried books of a certain kind—the City Lights poets, Ginsberg, Ferlinghetti, and Corso in those pamphlet-like, unglossy volumes; a lot of titles from Grove Press and New Directions, including some of the famously banned (*Naked Lunch*, *Last Exit to Brooklyn*), alongside European authors who still seemed esoteric (Beckett, Ionesco, Pinter, Lorca, Céline). Any reader over forty can pretty much guess the rest—Kenneth Patchen, Alan Watts, Petronius—writers, as they all seemed then, attractively disreputable in their profile. Here, too, were books by social critics: C. Wright Mills’s *White Collar* and *The Power Elite*; Paul Goodman’s *Growing Up Absurd* and *Utopian Essays*; and an array of left-wing magazines—

Ramparts, the *Realist*, some wilder ones whose names I’ve forgotten. To see these books together, to imagine the people who read them, was to feel oneself obscurely pledged to a society within the society. Who could say how far such a counter-current might not come to matter? What made it richer was that those who possessed the clue were known to each other without external marks. Sentiment and opinion had created this dissident party of the mind as a placeless underground—emergent in the late fifties and appearing to grow stronger until the youth culture killed it in the late sixties. Its members while it lasted could materialize almost anywhere—the queue for a movie by Renoir or Truffaut or the knot of persons under a particular placard at an antiwar rally. Dissidence had a character then, familiar to its initiates, a style not a lifestyle, appropriate to a moment of hope that had not given way to fantasies of salvation.

It should have been at the Dialogue Book Shop (I don’t remember if it was) that I picked up a copy of Herbert Marcuse’s *One-Dimensional Man*. This must have been in 1967, and I read it, a book “in an unknown tongue,/ Which yet I understood,” with the attention one bestows on a proof that solves the problem of the world. Marcuse explained why articulate dissent could be tolerated in America on terms that assured its sinking impotently into the secondary décor. Unimpressed by the empirical literature of opinion surveys, he proposed that “left to speak for themselves, the conditions speak loudly enough. Perhaps the most telling evidence can be obtained by simply looking at television or listening to AM radio for one consecutive hour for a couple of days, not shutting off the commercials and now and then switching the station.” The experiment—his younger readers must have tried it often enough—did really suggest what he said it would. American society was and was not free. Many expressions and practices that were frowned on were also coun-

tenanced. Few things, Marcuse conceded, were banned or censored. Yet the availability of everything muffled the impact of anything.

We have less actual censorship today than we did when Marcuse offered his clue to the totalitarian character of American culture. Why, then, does his description seem truer now than it did thirty-five years ago? The proliferation of transgressive styles, very visible on the Internet and in shopping mall holes-in-the-wall that sell advanced sex equipment and twelve dozen varieties of PlayStation games—all this has made every competent young consumer the virtuoso of a contour-built self-image. You can get every kind of jolt, and not only will no one bother you about it, nobody so much as looks up. A college doesn't feel itself a proper college unless it has every student room wired for accessibility to cable television. Last year, I heard an undergraduate reply to a friend's question about meeting in the library: "Well, the next two hours I have to be at my PlayStation."

The path that turns a stammering dissatisfaction into organized protest is always littered with false starts; yet the eloquence of someone saying No makes a memorable proof that resistance can be more than a gesture. William Lloyd Garrison began his Fourth of July Address of 1829 as follows:

I speak not as a partisan or an opponent of any man or measure, when I say that our politics are rotten to the core. *We* boast of our freedom, who go shackled to the polls, year after year, by tens, and hundreds, and thousands! *We* talk of free agency, who are the veriest machines—the merest automata—in the hands of unprincipled jugglers! *We* prate of integrity, and virtue, and independence, who sell our birthright for office, and who, nine times in ten, do not get Esau's bargain—no, not even a mess of pottage! Is it republicanism to say, that the majority can do no wrong? Then I am not a republican. Is it aristocracy to say, that the people sometimes shamelessly abuse their high trust? Then I am an aristocrat. It is not the appreciation, but the abuse of liberty, to withdraw altogether from the polls, or to visit them merely as a matter of form, without carefully investigating the merits of the candidates.

It can seem strange now and almost exotic that an American, in the ranks of dissent, could summon an audience responsive to such eloquence,

an audience that would grow and that, over time, would carry its convictions all the way into action.

Yet it is a matter not only of public confidence but private confidence. Perhaps, first, one says No to oneself. Emerson wrote in his journals about the coming into force of the Fugitive Slave Law, after the compromise of 1850:

We are glad at last to get a clear case, one on which no shadow of doubt can hang. This is not meddling with other people's affairs: this is hindering other people from meddling with us. This is not going crusading into Virginia and Georgia after slaves, who, it is alleged, are very comfortable where they are:—that amiable argument falls to the ground: but this is befriending in our own State, on our own farms, a man who has taken the risk of being shot, or burned alive, or cast into the sea, or starved to death, or suffocated in a wooden box, to get away from his driver; and this man who has run the gauntlet of a thousand miles for his freedom, the statute says, you men of Massachusetts shall hunt, and catch, and send back again to the dog-hutch he fled from. And this filthy enactment was made in the nineteenth century, by people who could read and write. I will not obey it, by God.

Emerson's hatred of the Fugitive Slave Law was partly a hatred of the people who would comply with it, people whose "every truth is not quite true." Not the deepest but the first motive of an underground is an almost physical recoil from the lives and sayings of the lukewarm.

Every protest is local at first, compared to what it can become. Garrison must have angered many, even as he roused new numbers to his side, when he gave up colonization and went for complete emancipation, of women as well as Negroes, as the only remedy for a false democracy. Martin Luther King did something similar when he broadened his view of the civil rights movement to include a protest against the injustice of the Vietnam War. In a press conference in July 1967, King was asked about this by one of his followers, who believed he was neglecting the cause to which he owed an undeviating loyalty. King replied,

I'm a clergyman. I was a clergyman before I was a civil rights leader, and when I was ordained to the Christian ministry, I accepted that as a commission to constantly and forever

bring the ethical insights of our Judeo-Christian heritage to bear on the social evils of our day. And I happen to think war is one of the major evils facing mankind.

Secondly, it would be foolhardy for me to work for integrated schools or integrated lunch counters and not be concerned about the survival of the world in which to be integrated.

Third, I have worked too long now, and too hard to get rid of segregation in public accommodations to turn back to the point of segregating my moral concern. Justice is indivisible. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. And wherever I see injustice, I'm going to take a stand against it whether it's in Mississippi or whether it's in Vietnam.

This is not one of King's best known utterances. Yet it is part of living memory and should be part of living speech.

The successors of the underground, in the early 1970s, were gnawed at by a fear of growing solitude. We consoled ourselves with the thought that we were a generation. But why is being a generation any better than being a majority? You may sham a sympathy with the slogans or icons of the mass culture where the latter seem to "gesture toward" political reform. Yet the wish for approval, or for something to approve of, is numbing. We do not say what we think, and then we forget to think what we think. Uncensored persons are rare, but in the early sixties some people got some important things right, through speaking the apparently unspeakable. The underground carried the weight of global reform when it reasoned about the futility of nuclear war. The test ban treaty was one result—an unimaginable fulfillment until it happened. How long has it been since a journalist or a satirist mentioned "the Establishment?" We have lost the word. We certainly have not lost the thing. Yet the people who recognize the thing and protest, for example, against G-8 meetings, seem to have no point of contact with liberal lawmakers or with the people who read or write the news.

Self-respect emerges in children when they learn to make discriminations all on their own. Nobody knows where the ability comes from. Shame undoubtedly plays a part, and shame with a complex source: the dread of disappointing an external authority that one has learned to admire; and an inward ideal of consistency

or integrity, which naturally shuns certain actions as base. But is not self-respect also known, early and unmistakably, by a feeling that one must resist a particular worldly claim, a claim that one interprets as a trespass against oneself?

American society today affords the young no visible front on which to mount resistance. When the society demands only consumption, what do you resist with? Possibly a naked selfishness is the last frontier of counterattack. Much of black and white hip-hop music is new in its assertion of selfishness. But even here the grounds for a contest are dubious; the society, after all, openly fosters a genteel selfishness. "How dare you say my behavior's unacceptable,/ so condescending, unnecessarily critical" (as a current heavy metal lyric has it)—the grown-up is seen as unnecessarily negative because the teenager only wants what the grown-up has. At a different hour of the day, the same rebel may find himself on a Web site that claims "the largest database of the world's most good-looking, rich, and superficial people" (*superficial* having become synonymous with *sparkling*). The messages of the song and the Web site are not really so different—most of the listeners who admire the style of the first would probably want to be banked by the second.

Now that the middle class has surrendered its belief in all distinctions save those of property, nothing separates a well-off boy or girl from one lower down the ladder except the quantity of money in easy reach. The effects of this democratization of surface have been a moral and political disaster. When, by contrast, the established culture of America in the 1950s clenched its fist and uttered its watchwords, the strength of the display hardened those in opposition. The young today have been robbed of that provocation. The availability, to them, of almost all the goods makes every higher aim harder to imagine than before. And yet I think the underground will return. It will, because there is so much to protest. The change of mood will not come from below or from above. It will not come in the form of a referendum, a Web site, or a sequence of court decisions. It will come out of odd corners, a few more than anyone guessed. ●

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Without Consent: Global Capital Mobility and Democracy

Jeff Faux

SHORTLY AFTER HE became the first general secretary of the World Trade Organization, Renato Ruggiero observed, “We are no longer writing the rules of interaction among separate national economies. We are writing the constitution of a single global economy.”

The word constitution—with its implication of world government—shocked some international trade officials. Like a reference to sex at a Victorian dinner table by an otherwise respectable gentleman, it was resolutely ignored by the business press and the policy academics, whose public commentary acts as a Greek chorus for what George Soros so aptly named “free-market fundamentalism.” The WTO, sings the chorus, is *not* a constitution. Its purpose is “free trade,” an arrangement that presumably requires less, not more, government.

Yet Ruggiero was simply acknowledging the obvious. Markets are not found in a state of nature. They are human creations, defined by enforceable rules. Even the most primitive markets require rules for what constitutes private property, valid contracts, weights and measures, and so on. And they always reflect a social contract.

In modern, civilized economies, rules are enforced by public institutions—legislatures, courts, regulatory agencies, central banks. The social contract includes protection of labor, the environment, and public health from the brutalities of unconstrained capitalism.

The precise content of a market’s rules has major consequences for who gets to be rich and who gets to be poor. Therefore, all markets have a *politics*. Political science, as a famous American scholar once observed, is the study

of “who gets what.”

When markets expand their boundaries, so must the rules. In our own history, advances in technology, business organization, and westward migration expanded the U.S. economy from a series of regional markets, regulated by state governments, to a continental economy regulated primarily by the federal government. Note that the federal government did not just impose rules on trade *among* the states, but market rules *within* the states as well. Because we had a Constitution guaranteeing some form of democracy and a Bill of Rights, the new rules were subject to public debate. Political parties evolved around class-based conflicts over land settlement, the gold standard, anti-trust, child labor, social security, environmental protections, and so forth.

Today, technology, business organization, and migration are relentlessly expanding markets beyond the capacity of individual nation-states to regulate them. Because business must have rules, a constitution for the global market is being written—at the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank. Befitting a world dominated by one superpower, the U.S. Treasury and the Pentagon play leadership roles. Because there is no prior framework of democracy or accountability, the new constitution is being written piecemeal, in secret, and publicly unacknowledged, except for an occasional slip of the tongue, as in the case of Ruggiero.

Who Decides?

But if all rule-setting generates politics, what are the politics of the setting of the new rules for the global economy? Who gets to decide “who gets what?”

To the typical reader of the world’s major newspapers or watcher of the nightly news, the rules for a borderless economy seem to be set by a sort of parliament of nations, where fi-

nance ministers at the IMF, trade ministers at the WTO, and economic ministers at the World Bank pursue their national interests. Interestingly enough, the new constitution is not being written at the United Nations, which is presumably our principal world legislature.

This notion of “national” interests dominates the language of globalization. Thus, the reports from the recent WTO meetings in Cancun speak of *U.S. interests vs. Brazil’s interests vs. South Africa’s interests*, and so on. . . . The implication of this language is that when George W. Bush or Lula or Thabo Mbeki turns his gaze to foreign economic affairs, the domestic conflict over “who gets what” stops at the border.

National interests are then aggregated into international blocs. Global economic politics is presented as a conflict between rich countries and poor countries, the North and the South, the producers of raw materials and the producers of software.

Yet, as the late Michael Harrington once remarked, there are poor people in rich countries and rich people in poor countries. And just as politics in an expanding American economy developed around class and other interests across state lines, a similar process is going on in the current globalizing economy.

The individuals who negotiate trade and investment agreements and who sit on the boards of the IMF, the World Bank, and international financial agencies formally represent different national interests. But they increasingly act as agents for an international class interest as well. Globalization has created a global elite—people with mutual economic interests regardless of nationality. They include the leaders of multinational corporations and their financiers, their political partners, and their clients and retainers among the punditry, the military, the international bureaucracies, and the academy.

After a speech I gave a few years ago at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York, a retired State Department official bluntly underlined the fundamental reality. “What you don’t understand,” he said, “is that when we negotiate economic agreements with these poorer countries, we are negotiating with people from the same class. That is, people whose interests are like ours.”

I call this global governing class the Party of Davos, after the Swiss site of one of the annual conferences of the global elite. As Adam Smith reminded us, “People of the same trade seldom meet together, even for merriment and diversion, but the conversation ends in a conspiracy against the public.” We should expect no less when people from different countries with the same interests meet at the global economy’s watering holes for merriment, diversion . . . and conspiracy. It would be odd if it were otherwise. So it should be no surprise that the rules of the global market written by the Party of Davos protect and promote the positions of its membership—those who control large amounts of capital. The rules thus encourage trade deregulation, privatization, weakening of unions, financial market liberalization, and a general shredding of the social contract.

This is not to say that the world’s governing class is always of exactly one mind, or that nationality plays no role in the pursuit of self-interest. Bankers in Miami see the world differently than bankers in Portland, Oregon. Those in London have a different perspective from those in Singapore. But when it comes to protecting the generic rights of capital, the elites of Miami, Portland, London, and Singapore are united.

Accordingly, issues of concern to other classes are, by joint agreement, left out of the agendas of the IMF, the WTO, and other international forums, and therefore out of the concerns of the global constitution. These include the rights of labor, the protection of the environment, public health, community stability . . . and of course, democracy and accountability.

These interests are championed by the minor party in the politics of global markets. Let us call it the Party of Porto Alegre, the original Brazilian site of the World Social Forum. This is the party of the opposition. It includes many labor unions, environmental organizations, religious and human rights activists, indigenous groups, and their many sympathizers around the world. They first came together at the WTO meeting in Seattle in the last weeks of the twentieth century when they crashed the party of the Party of Davos.

The often bizarre television images that the

world sees of the street activists of the Party of Porto Alegre harassing the Party of Davos from one meeting of the IMF or the WTO to another are distortions designed to ridicule any opposition to Davos's hegemony. Yet, the images do capture an important part of their relationship. The goal of the Party of Davos is to escape popular constraints on capital and the goal of the Party of Porto Alegre is to constrain it—making it subject to democracy and accountability. This is why the constitution of the new world order is not being written at the United Nations. The UN is too unwieldy, too transparent, and too susceptible to Porto Alegre-ish sentiments.

Whatever separate goals its members might pursue, the common agenda of the Party of Davos is to break the bargaining power of labor. By labor, I do not mean just labor unions, but the vast majority of the people on this planet who must work in order to live—from industrial and service workers in advanced countries to rural laborers and marginal peasants in the most economically backward corners of the globe. The bargaining between labor and capital—which takes place within the firm and in a society's political life—is what makes up the “social contract” that is required in order to legitimize the unequal distribution of income, wealth, and power that markets generate.

Still, Davos makes a moral claim. It is that an emphasis on the distribution of wealth actually makes the poor worse off. In contrast, says Davos, deregulated capitalism makes for faster economic growth, and that growth improves life for everyone—especially the poor.

The Davos Record

We now have been at Davos's neoliberal program for twenty years, time enough to evaluate this claim. Of course, in a world of roughly two hundred separate nations and six billion people, measuring anything on a global scale is very tricky, particularly when the policies pursued by the different economies have not been uniform. But some things seem clear.

Most important, after two decades of neoliberalism, global economic growth has slowed from the previous twenty years. From 1960 to 1980, world gross domestic product

grew at an average rate of 4.6 percent annually. In the following two decades, under increasing free trade and deregulation, growth in the world economy slowed to less than 2.9 percent annually. Moreover, those fast-growing countries that provide the most weight in the aggregate numbers—China and India—were the most resistant to the advice of the bankers, the international bureaucrats, and the army of consultants who work for the Party of Davos.

The trends on poverty and inequality are more difficult to sort out. But it appears that if one eliminates China and India—who represent 38 percent of the world's population—from the calculation, world poverty has not improved very much. Inequality among nations has certainly gotten worse. And inequality within nations seems to have increased in Latin America, Africa, Eastern and Central Europe, Central Asia. All but five industrialized countries (Denmark, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Spain, and Switzerland) saw inequality increase while France saw no change in inequality. A recent analysis by Christian E. Weller, Robert E. Scott, and Adam S. Hersch of the Economic Policy Institute reports that the median income of the richest 10 percent of the world's people were 70 times that of the poorest 10 percent in 1980, and 122 times in 1999.

Competent scholars argue over these numbers, but one thing is obvious to all but the hopelessly ideological: the last twenty years have not produced the surge in living standards that neoliberalism's champions promised would flow from the liberation of capital from social constraints and the weakening of the bargaining power of the world's working people. Even then-World Bank president James Wolfensohn in 1999 was moved to admit, “At the level of people, the system isn't working,” suggesting that there are other “levels” at which the system is working perfectly well.

The NAFTA Model

One place to see the process more clearly is here on our own continent, where in January the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) will be ten years old.

Like the WTO, NAFTA does more than just govern trade among its three members—Canada, Mexico, and the United States. If

NAFTA had only been concerned with free trade, the agreement could have been written on a few pages. Instead, NAFTA is a thousand-page template for the constitution of an emerging continental economy.

In fact, NAFTA was a model for the WTO. It is the explicit template for the proposed Free Trade Agreement of the Americas, the Central American Free Trade Agreement, and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum. And it is the inspiration of the economic portion of the Bush administration's September 2002 National Security Strategy, openly referred to by its intellectual supporters as an agenda for "empire."

The vision of economic integration embodied in NAFTA differs from the vision of the other major model of regional market integration—the European Union. The development of the EU has been based on the understanding that common political institutions are the inevitable consequence of common economies. Every major step of the process was, and still is, transparent—subject to fiery public debates over the rules, particularly over the balance between individual rights, local sovereignty, and market efficiency.

In contrast, the constitution of the single North American market was merchandized to the citizens and legislators of each of the three countries as a simple, narrow, stand-alone agreement on foreign trade.

NAFTA does, of course, promote increased trade between Canada, Mexico, and the United States. Its text lays out a timetable for the elimination of customs barriers on everything from vegetables to truck transportation. But it is also as much an investment agreement as a trade agreement. The document binds each nation to extraordinary protection of the other member states' investors. It requires governments to guarantee the repatriation of profits in hard currency. Its Chapter 11 gives private investors the right to bring suit against governments over laws that might endanger future profits (defined as "tantamount to expropriation"). It inhibits efforts by national governments to liberalize the ownership of intellectual property. Disputes are settled in secret by tribunals of experts, many of whom are employed privately as corporate lawyers and con-

sultants.

The result is a framework for the governance of the continental economy that curtails domestic powers of popularly elected government. NAFTA restricts the public sector's freedom of action in taxation, procurement, and capital market policies. Under NAFTA, corporations have forced state and provincial governments in each country to rescind environmental regulations. United Parcel Service is currently charging that Canada's government-owned postal service violates UPS's NAFTA-given right to provide private mail service. Little by little, policy proposals in all three nations now must pass the test of whether they are "NAFTA compatible."

In effect, NAFTA is a constitution that recognizes only one citizen—the multinational corporate investor. Governments will be punished for infringing on the rights of investors, whose protection is guaranteed. But governments may diminish, even abolish, the civil rights of workers or the claims of the environment with impunity. In contrast to the detailed protections for investors in NAFTA itself, the fig-leaf "side agreements" covering labor and the environment are weak and unenforceable.

Had this formula been proposed as the governing constitution of Canada, Mexico, or the United States, the electorates of each nation would have no doubt overwhelmingly rejected it. But, by defining the debate over its adoption as a dispute between abstract notions of "free trade" and "protectionism," the promoters of NAFTA diverted attention from the larger political significance of the agreement.

To be sure, there was protectionist opposition to NAFTA in all three nations. But the traditional politics of previous trade battles, in which industrial sectors—including employers, workers, and communities—who might lose from freer trade were pitted against industrial sectors that might win, was muted. The investor protections of NAFTA split off the interests of large U.S. employers from their workers by allowing firms to shift production to lower cost Mexico. Thus, U.S. auto firms' chief executive officers supported the treaty while U.S. auto workers opposed it.

The conflict over NAFTA thus reflected a new, class-based politics of trade. The opposi-

tion was led not by industrial “losers,” but by the social movements—labor, environmentalists, consumers and nationalists in all three countries who were alarmed over the potential loss of national sovereignty and the domestic social contract.

The central claim for NAFTA was Davosian: the agreement would create a sustained economic boom in Mexico that would more than compensate for any social costs. One typical prediction, by a U.S. undersecretary of commerce, was that Mexico would grow, “between a supercharged 6 percent a year, worthy of Asia’s tigers, and a startling 12 percent per year comparable to China’s recent economic growth.” The growth would lift the country’s poor (more than 40 percent of Mexicans live on less than \$2 a day) into the middle class.

The Mexican boom, in turn, would bring economic benefits to the United States and, to a lesser extent, Canada. First, the immigration of undocumented Mexican workers would diminish, if not disappear. In 1990, then-president of Mexico Carlos Salinas asked an American audience, “Where do you want Mexicans working, in Mexico or in the United States?” Second, NAFTA would create a new middle-class market in Mexico for the more expensive goods produced in the United States and Canada.

NAFTA at Ten

It is now painfully obvious that the promise of greater economic growth was not fulfilled. Over the last ten years, Mexico’s growth has been at best half of what it needs to create enough jobs for its expanding labor force. Since 2000, Mexico has scarcely grown at all. The record would have been worse but for the unsustainable U.S. boom in the late 1990s which boosted Mexican exports. Since the mid-1980s, when the neoliberal reforms began, growth has fallen to less than a third of the 3.4 percent rate at which Mexico grew in the years of the 1960s and 1970s—the so-called “bad old days” of government industrial policies and import substitution.

While the economic benefits fell short, the human and social costs of the continent-wide reallocation of investment rose dramatically. These costs included the destruction of liveli-

hood of millions of workers, particularly in Mexican agricultural labor and U.S. manufacturing. On both sides of the border, the promises made to these working populations were abandoned almost as soon as the ink was dry on the agreement. For example, Mexican farmers were promised that they would receive generous financial and technical assistance to help them meet competition from U.S. agribusiness. But after the treaty was signed, funding for farm programs dropped dramatically. Meanwhile, the U.S. government massively increased subsidies for corn, wheat, livestock, dairy products, and other farm products exported to Mexico. This, “comparative advantage” enabled U.S. agribusiness to drive thousands of small Mexican farmers out of their own markets. When the displaced campesinos and their families arrived in nearby cities, few jobs were waiting. NAFTA concentrated growth along Mexico’s northern border, where the Mexican government keeps unions out so that the *maquiladora* factories can process and assemble goods for export to the United States with workers who are desperate, pliable, and even cheaper than elsewhere in Mexico. Between 1994 and 2000, *maquiladora* employment doubled while employment in the rest of the country stagnated.

In the absence of labor and environmental protections, the expanding sweatshops of the north created a social and ecological nightmare. Rural migrants overwhelmed the already inadequate housing, health, and public-safety infrastructures, spreading shantytowns, pollution, and crime. *Maquiladora* managers often hire large numbers of women, whom they believe are more docile and more dexterous than men at assembly work. Earnings are typically about \$55 a week for forty-five hours—not enough for survival in an area where acute shortages of basic services have raised the cost of living. Families break up as men cross the border in search of jobs, leaving women vulnerable to the social chaos.

An Amnesty International report on the border town of Ciudad Juárez, where hundreds of young women have been killed, quotes the director of the city’s only rape crisis center (annual budget: \$4,500): “This city has become a place to murder and dump women. [Authori-

ties] are not interested in solving these cases because these women are young and poor and dispensable.”

In the United States, workers were betrayed by major multinational firms that had assured the U.S. Congress that their interest in NAFTA was solely in the middle-class Mexican market. Once the agreement was signed, these same firms began to shift production south of the border, eliminating hundreds of thousands of jobs in the United States. Clearly, the object of their desire was the low-wage Mexican worker, not the mythical high-wage Mexican consumer.

The net effect was to undercut wage levels on both sides of the border. Indeed, despite the shift of manufacturing to Mexico, average real wages in Mexican manufacturing in January 2003 were some 9 percent below their January 1994 level. No doubt some Mexicans have benefited from cheaper prices of expensive U.S. and Canadian goods. But in a country where the poverty rate is above 50 percent, the basic cost of living for most people seems to have gotten worse. For example, in December 1994, the minimum wage (currently \$4.20 per day) bought 44.9 pounds of tortillas. Today it buys 18.6 pounds. In December 1994, it bought 24.5 litres of gas for cooking and heating. Today it buys seven.

So the dangerous migration across the border continues. “If you’re going to improve your life, you have to go to the United States,” said a neighbor of one of the nineteen undocumented Mexican migrants found asphyxiated in a Houston-bound truck in May 2003.

The failure of NAFTA to produce sufficient growth to absorb its own labor force should not have been a surprise. The conventional economic argument for free trade is not that it promotes growth, but that the reallocation of capital among the lines of comparative advantage promotes efficiency gains in the form of lower prices. Freer trade can produce such gains, but most efforts to measure them consistently produce small numbers.

Recently, the World Bank estimated that the Doha round agenda would add roughly \$160 billion in static gains—the gains consistent with free trade theory—to the GDP of the world’s developing nations. The number was

used in the chorus of recrimination against the third world nations for letting the meeting in Cancún fail. Yet, a closer look at the estimates shows that they completely ignore any costs of dislocation, unemployment, and the loss of markets by local producers. Even so, these “gross” gains represent an increase of only 1.5 percent of GDP by the year 2015. Harvard economist Dani Rodrik has observed that “no widely accepted model attributes to postwar trade liberalization more than a tiny fraction of the increased prosperity of advanced industrial countries.”

Frightened by the disputed election of 1988 that almost installed a leftist president, elites in both countries wanted to make it much harder for a future populist Mexican government to pursue redistribution politics. It was a shared objective: inasmuch as the ownership of assets in a single market is commingled, there is little practical distinction between the rights of Canadian, U.S., or Mexican multinational investors. Moreover, NAFTA created new opportunities for Mexican business elites to broker privatized assets to foreign investors at enormous profit. For example, an investment group headed by the well-connected Roberto Hernandez bought Mexico’s second largest commercial bank from the government for \$3.1 billion and resold it to Citicorp for \$12.5 billion. Foreign investors now own more than 85 percent of the Mexican banking system, yet credit available to Mexican business has actually shrunk.

The problem of Mexican growth will not disappear with the revival of the U.S. economy. Mexico’s temporary faster growth in the late 1990s was a function of an extraordinary boom in the United States that we now know was unsustainable. With generous injections of fiscal stimulus, U.S. growth may accelerate for a while, but the chances of a return to those years of excessive speculation are remote. With the U.S. trade deficit now expanding to worrisome levels, policymakers may soon be looking for more ways to limit imports. The ominous shifting of production from Mexican *maquiladoras* to even lower cost China is further evidence that the assumption that Mexico’s needed growth would automatically flow from free trade was naïve.

In many developing countries, the largest part of Mexico's economic problem lies not in restricted export markets, but in the stifling maldistribution of wealth and power that restricts internal growth. The rich pay hardly any taxes. Despite the image of Mexico as a country with a strong state, the public revenue is 19 percent of GDP, compared with the more than 30 percent that the presumably more conservative American public sector takes.

Seeking an Alternative

The alternatives thus far presented by the Party of Porto Alegre seem to be caught in a web of contradictions. For example, at the same time that demonstrators demand that the IMF and other world institutions respect local sovereignty and end efforts to impose the neoliberal model, they demand that a wide variety of their own rules—independence for indigenous tribes, gender and racial equality, priority for small farmers, environmental regulations—be imposed on sovereign nations

Moreover, the Party of Porto Alegre is caught in a Catch-22 situation:

- Social justice requires global political institutions to regulate the global market
- Global political institutions are dominated by the Party of Davos
- The Party of Davos is hostile to social justice

The Party of Porto Alegre is thus forced back into a defense of national sovereignty as the only available instrument for achieving social justice. Yet sovereignty is steadily eroding under the relentless pressure of global markets. Moreover, nationalist politics undercut the cross-border cooperation needed to balance the cross-border political reach of business and finance. Nationalism perpetuates the myth that national identity is the only factor in determining whether one wins or loses in the global economy. It obscures the common interests of working families in all countries when faced with the alliances of investors that now dominate the global marketplace.

Still, human rights and social justice will become part of the "constitution" of the global marketplace only when enough nation-states demand it. Therefore, the global opposition

must pursue a common global program for working people that reinforces their national struggles for economic and social equity. Such a program would support national democratic movements and leaders who understand that national social contracts cannot be maintained in a global market that lacks one of its own, and that a global social contract cannot be established in the absence of effective social democracy at the national level.

The creation of a true global alternative requires a perspective through which the interests of workers in all countries are linked. In a global marketplace, workers' living standards increasingly rise and fall together. When workers in Brazil win a wage increase, it raises the bargaining power of workers in Germany. When workers in Indonesia improve their working conditions, workers in Nigeria benefit. Likewise, when the social safety net is strengthened in one country it helps those struggling for human economic and social rights in other countries as well.

In a world of countries desperate for investment, the development of a global political movement powerful enough to bring the investor class to the bargaining table is clearly a long way off. But, with a nod to Margaret Thatcher, there is no alternative.

I believe that it is time for us to concentrate on a feasible project—the building of a model of cross-border solidarity among the ordinary people of our own continent.

A Modest Continental Proposal

Despite the failure of NAFTA to deliver on the promises of its architects, it is here to stay. Every day more intracontinental connections in finance, marketing, production, and other business networks are being hardwired for a consolidated North American market. Almost 70 percent of U.S. imports from Mexico are within the same firm or related firms producing the same final product. Ford pick-up trucks are now assembled in Cuautitlan, Mexico, with engines from Windsor, Ontario, and transmissions from Livonia, Michigan. Labor markets are relentlessly merging, for professionals as well as migrant workers.

Post- 9/11 border security concerns in the U.S. slowed down the process. But commerce

will prevail, and is now above pre- 9/11 levels. Ultimately, the War on Terrorism is more likely to constrict the political freedoms of North Americans than the freedom of money and goods to cross their borders.

Moreover, the writing of the North American constitution continues. Out of the public eye, trigovernmental task forces and committees are discussing proposals ranging from guest-worker programs to continental transportation systems and the privatization of Canadian water and Mexican oil. Think-tanks, new academic institutes, and business associations are debating ideas about the harmonization of taxes and regulation, monetary policies, and a single currency. As the former Canadian ambassador to the United States recently commented, "Few days go by without new ideas for keeping NAFTA." The shared assumption is that the necessary political governance of the North American economy can be achieved by stealth, by grafting new agreements onto the basic NAFTA framework without stirring up public concerns over sovereignty and accountability.

But, sooner rather than later, the question of NAFTA's future must become part of the domestic politics of each nation. We need a process in which electorates of all three countries share an honest dialogue over the common future that was denied them in the first NAFTA debate.

In all three countries, the sense that globalization is beyond the influence of the majority of people has disempowered the public discussion of how to shape a common future. A focus on the question, "What do we want North America to look like ten or twenty years from now?" might be a way to revive that discussion and eventually generate the basis for a new and more comprehensive bargain among all people of the three countries.

Shortly after his election, Mexican president Vicente Fox suggested that NAFTA countries adopt a version of the European Union's program for investment in poorer areas. Mexico—even more so than the poorest nations of Western Europe—needs substantial investment in education, health, and infrastructure to create sufficient jobs for its people.

Fox's proposal was rejected in both Washington and Ottawa. It may be time to revive that suggestion to create a new Grand Bargain. In return for long-term financial assistance for Mexico's public investment, the working people of Canada and the United States would get an agreement on enforceable labor and environmental standards, so that as Mexico grows, wage levels and working conditions will rise—creating a middle-class market in Mexico and preventing the undercutting of labor standards north of the border. It could also build a middle-class constituency for modern tax, legal and public administration systems. The credible prospect of widely shared prosperity in Mexico that is creating enough jobs for its people would, in turn, make it easier to achieve a satisfactory accord on migration.

Debate over a new bargain might also recognize that democracy is incompatible with Chapter 11 and other NAFTA provisions that undermine the authority of the local public sector. And it might initiate an honest effort to apply the principles of sustainability to the continent's economic growth.

A continent-wide project for economic and social justice has another great advantage. It could provide a way to work out a model for the governance of a global economy that reconciles the tension between the relentless drive of technology to expand the boundaries of the market and the human needs of a decent society. Focusing on building such a decent society in our own continental neighborhood could also help redirect our political energies away from the temptation of global empire.

Just perhaps, if we could achieve economic integration with social justice between two first world societies and one third world society on this continent, we might have something to contribute to the development of a just and prosperous global society. ●

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On Unions and Education

Deborah Meier

DESPITE POPULAR impressions and dinner-table gossip, the problems of our schools, and above all of “school reform,” are not the result of unions. I speak in part from personal experience over the past thirty-five years in New York City and Boston. The last big project I was involved with in New York, which required real courage on the part of all the major institutional powers, came to a screeching halt because everyone backed down *except* the teacher’s union. We had asked for a “free zone”—constituting no more than 5 percent of New York’s student population as an experiment in non-regulation (or at least vastly decreased regulation). The state, the city, and the Board of Education ended up backing away, but at no point did the United Federation of Teachers. Perhaps they would have if and when we really began to operate (except on matters of wages and working conditions) outside of the union contract. They weren’t always enthusiastic supporters; they were skeptical from first to last and might have become more so if the idea had caught on. But that’s speculation; in fact they never flinched. They saw the project, they said, as an experiment in providing a form of schooling that would produce better results for kids while also empowering classroom teachers.

My experience over the past five years in Boston is similar. The Pilot Schools project—involving at the start no more than 5 percent of Boston’s students—was based on an agreement between the Boston Teachers Union and the Boston Public Schools to suspend all the regular contractual agreements as they applied to a dozen or so schools, provide a flexible per capita budget to each school, and allow freedom from other city-mandated requirements

with regard to curriculum, scheduling, and staffing. Both the BTU and BPS soon lost their initial enthusiasm for the project—which they probably first saw as an answer to charter schools. But the BTU never went back on the original agreement. Small-scale quarrels between the pilots and the BPS, however, were and are constant as we negotiate each provision anew every year: Which budget item do we have control over and which do they? What voice do we have over state-provided “coaches”? Given the constraints of busing, what freedom do we actually have over scheduling? And so on. Because most of the daily issues relate to freedom from city, not union, rules it is hardly surprising that our frustration is usually focused on the “system.” The major worry we hear from the union is whether these less constrained schools actually offer more power to classroom teachers rather than school principals. Both parties also worry that, under the label of autonomy, the Pilot Schools are choosier about which students they accept. Do they, for example, accept fewer troubled students? And both worry about what the consequences would be if the idea really spread—in terms of the impact on system-wide seniority, accountability, and so on.

These are legitimate issues. In a climate of high-stakes testing and increasing competition, many good reforms can turn into monsters. I’m disinclined of late even to call myself a school reformer. Too often it feels like deforming.

When I visited Houston, Texas, recently, I was alarmed at how many teachers came up to me to say that they couldn’t speak out as I was doing and hold their jobs in Houston. There was a rule against speaking or writing against district policies. Georgia teachers, meeting with me at a summer institute in Massachusetts, literally whispered about their problems with testing. “Why are you whispering,” I

asked? “Because we could lose our jobs.”

What do these two states have in common? Weak unions with no legal bargaining rights. So there is an eerie internal silence about issues of importance. Of course, the silence is not confined to Georgia and Texas. Even in a union stronghold like New York, much is not discussed that ought to be.

For example, there is no doubt that (some) small and more autonomous schools in New York have become choosier in whom they take, in a setting in which “ability” (and social class and race) tracking has returned with a vengeance. Small schools of choice have often become a kind of parallel “private school-like” network, with the same kind of rank order between the most elite and the least. This was true long before “choice” existed, as neighborhood schools that reflected social class and ethnic differences performed the same function as ability tracking. Similar tendencies could soon affect Boston’s citywide schools of choice movement (which originally was instituted as a court-approved response to racial segregation)—especially now that all racial and ethnic categories have been eliminated in the current anti-affirmative action climate.

And the focus on “results”—setting standards as the basis of graduation rather than piling up credits or seat time, presented so powerfully by Ted Sizer in *Horace’s Compromise* and pioneered by schools such as the Central Park East Secondary School that I helped found in 1985—has taken an odd turn. It has too often been used to increase the power of centralized authorities, of both superintendents and principals, and even more ominously of state politicians, with “standards” turning into standardized tests. And then the tests are enforced by state and federal mandates with detailed rewards and punishments for those dotting and not dotting their “i”s appropriately. Indeed, it is often assumed that reform means allowing those at the top of the hierarchy to act decisively—that is, outside of formally bargained rules—in order to get better results. Or it means abandoning the public system entirely for that alternate system of decision making: the free—well, sort of free—market.

But the evidence is pretty clear that al-

though unions are a force to be reckoned with, and by nature conservative, especially in defense of basic teacher protections, they have not been a powerful force in preventing school reforms sought by mayors, governors, and local business coalitions—even those that undermine traditional teacher rights. Yes, of course, opposition or foot-dragging by the American Federation of Teachers or National Education Association makes such reforms harder to enact in states where unions are strong. But it’s unlikely that serious reforms can be effective if they are enacted from the top down, without the enthusiastic support of those who must implement them. This is hardly an idea requiring complicated sociological theories. When I was a member of my local school board twenty years ago, we received a petition from 99 percent of the staff of a local junior high expressing their lack of confidence in the principal. I told my colleagues on the board that we really had only two choices if our focus was on teaching and learning: we had to get rid of most of the staff or remove the principal. The case is similar when top-down reforms are resisted by teachers: you can get rid of the teachers or learn to negotiate the reforms.

YES, MOST UNIONS—including teachers’ unions with their highly educated membership—have a tendency to take on some of the qualities of the management they are counterpoised to. They get caught in their own power plays; they over-react, become rigid, and more. This is especially true when the local union serves a large district in which personal ties are difficult to maintain. And then teachers begin to see their union much as they see the rest of the system—impersonal, capricious, and inflexible, another hurdle to get around. They appreciate the union when they are dealing with a particularly vexatious principal or even with vexatious colleagues; they value it when it comes time to negotiate wages and benefits and to fight back against changes made without due process. But on a day-to-day basis, the union is just one more bureaucracy that has little to do with their working lives. A call to the union office is often just as frustrating as a call “downtown.”

In schools where collegiality is high, and

principal and teachers work easily together, many teachers feel even more estranged from their union. Teachers in small, successful communal schools often don't make their voices heard within the union; the voices of those who need the protection of rules and regulations are loudest and most powerful—as they should be! But this natural tendency sways the union into a more hostile or skeptical stance toward innovative schools where teachers appear not to need its protection—or where the protection they need may be from city hall, state legislators, the federal government, or from the union itself.

THESE ARE issues that won't easily be solved; and reformers—especially those who believe real reform must bring working teachers into greater positions of power over their schools—cannot ignore them. The imposition of greater authoritarian and bureaucratic controls over teachers, in the name of even the best curriculum and pedagogy, won't begin to tackle the decisive intellectual failings of our schools. In fact, it will exacerbate them on every front. It will make teaching less and less attractive to those considering a career—above all where they are most needed, in urban and rural schools serving low-income children, but also in many other places where creative work is taking place that could excite a new generation of teachers. The new authoritarianism is defended in the name of the “underprivileged,” in the name of “ordinary” kids, on the theory that truly creative, high quality teaching cannot be brought to scale—so that the vast majority of the least well-off American kids cannot hope for that. At best they must thrive on highly bureaucratized, centralized, scripted mediocrity.

This repeats an old, old story. Democracy is only for the affluent. Indeed, it's partially true, and unions need to acknowledge the partial truth. But it's not the whole truth. You cannot take ordinary underpaid teachers and ordinary underfunded schools and turn them around in the face of only grudging compliance from the staff. Maybe you can't do it even with generous funding. Teachers will resist reforms and will only “comply” under duress, unless they own the reforms and believe in them. Of

course, they resist; it is an honorable response to arbitrary power. If teachers didn't resist each new fad, they'd be lobotomized.

The intellectual need of the young, to become “critical thinkers,” requires schools that dare tackle stuff worth being critical about; it requires teachers who have the authority and respect to model the critical stance in the company of their peers and to present truly controversial stuff to the young. But at present only the rich can afford such schools—largely in the private sector or in the more affluent suburbs.

Good thinking cannot be passed on to the young by uncritical and compliant teachers. But, some would argue, such qualities are a luxury for the poor—and open to abuse. Let the regular schools first prove themselves on the ABCs and then, someday, they too can get to “critical thinking.” There's a certain logic to this, but it will not and cannot lead to high standards (although one can call any score on any test “high standard” or “proficient” if one has the power to do so).

The kind of workplace collaboration required by the graduates of our schools cannot be taught in schools focused only on rote learning or test prep or remediation. It cannot be learned where young people do not see adults serving as models of higher order thinking, but instead only experience adults struggling to follow the script or high-powered test preppers who zero in on what's really important: test scores, test scores, and test scores. We cannot tell kids that what counts is the quality of their language, their ability to think on their feet, to be reliable and responsible, to care about their community, to stand up and be counted, and to work well with others, if none of these in fact “count.” In this setting, it is unlikely that children will learn what it takes—or even what it means—to be an effective member of a thoughtful adult society. And surely such schools cannot teach what collaboration, solidarity, and community mean when adults are mostly busy complying.

So, both union and management need to figure out how reform might be enacted with the collaboration of teachers, in a way that provides them with appropriate power over major and minor decisions. It may take longer to see such reforms take hold, but going faster in the

wrong direction is no advantage at all! Here is what unions are best at doing—giving those closest to the action a voice, giving them respect and dignity. This is at the heart not only of teacher unions but of all unions everywhere.

Even industrial unions have found increased work-site voice important to the material success of auto plants (for example, the Saturn and Toyota plants), but the argument for its centrality when it comes to schools is far more powerful. It may not matter to the automobile whether it was produced by willing or unwilling workers (although the evidence suggests its users will notice the difference). But students are not automobiles, and the active intelligence of their teachers is central to the development of their own intelligence.

Oddly enough, quality control may matter more to auto-makers than to school-makers these days. Imagine if we were told that we can't afford to worry about whether the cars that come off the assembly line "work"—as we are told about the reforms we know are needed to make schools work. Small schools have proven effective, but they are too expensive, we're told. Not true if one counts the cost per graduate: in fact, they are cheaper if we count that way, at least in our urban communities.

TEACHERS CAN help Americans understand what works and doesn't work in our schools. Opinion polls confirm that they are still the most trusted group of public authorities in the country—ranking above mayors, governors, corporate CEOs, doctors, lawyers—and even principals! But when they join together to express their opinions, suddenly they turn into an "interest group" (unlike the Business Roundtable?). Yes, there have been occasions (rare, in fact) when teacher unions acted in ways that did not earn, or deserve, public trust—but compared to what and whom? To the corporate community?

When all is said and done, there's another reason why we need to worry about the public's perception of unions (and our own too). Not only are strong teacher unions critical to the success of teaching and learning, they are critical to the survival of the conditions needed to support teaching and learning. They are critical to the success of the mission of public

schools in a democracy: to produce citizens who can effectively rule.

Although there are many folks out there who have a stake in good public schools, the only organized and experienced allies, committed over time and with the necessary expertise and resources, are the teachers' unions. Parents come and go, and given the incredibly busy lives of the women who once led parents' organizations (especially in those communities where the need is greatest), sustaining their political power is almost impossible. They have been effectively weakened—even more than teachers—and are rarely represented on state or national task forces, think tanks, or school boards.

Politically, the parents of the children who are least well served by our schools are precisely the ones who have the least political leverage. They are less likely to be citizens, let alone voters; they are rarely people with the time or skill to make themselves heard. The foundations that try to represent their views are also constrained when it comes to political lobbying, and those on the liberal end are less likely these days to be ideological allies of unions and teachers. So the weakening of union power quickly translates, locally and nationally, into less support for the least well-served students, above all, the urban or rural poor. There may be loud cries for higher test scores, but there will be little concern about the fairness of our school system so long as those most directly affected by its unfairness are politically impotent. It is easier to pass off half-truths to a politically active public that has no direct exposure to how the other half lives—that doesn't, in fact, include the other half!

But it is also important to say that the larger inequities that affect poor children—that depress their test scores and always have—are not directly related to schools. The achievement gap in schools is as nothing compared to the resources gap out of school.

And in correcting such inequities, strong unions—not just teacher unions—are the primary and steady vehicle; they are the only substantial counterpoint to the power of organized greed. In a society in which the income differential is steadily widening, the clamor about decreasing the academic gaps—even if the fo-

cus were not solely on standardized test scores—won't be serious until there is an organized and "interested" power bloc whose members stand to gain, in the here and now, from greater equity.

The balance of power in contemporary America is way off, and threatens to get worse, not better. Redressing this imbalance—with the social power of numbers versus resources—has been one of the central functions of trade unions since their inception. They have been the dependable ally of the least advantaged for a hundred years when it comes to issues of wages, safety, health care, retirement, subsidized housing, public transportation, and on and on. Even on issues of racial equality, the unions, although often mirroring the racism of the larger society, have been allies in political fights to expand civil rights for at least half a century. And on issues more removed from everyday working life—issues of civil liberties, prison reform, abortion rights—unions have historically been the allies of reformers. In the current climate, the tenuous and fragile balance that has existed since the New Deal has been decisively shifted, if not altogether shattered. Until it is restored, it isn't just good schooling, but the good life for vast

numbers of our fellow citizens that is in jeopardy.

Thus, there are still many reasons why teachers and parents, and their friends and relatives, need to be the allies of their local teacher unions, even on those days when the unions make foolish mistakes, act with the same short-range self-interest as their opponents, and so on. The kind of support that is needed is not uncritical; it is not a matter of falling into line behind union leaders. But first and foremost, it means putting to rest the inaccurate idea that unions are to blame for the difficulties of school reform. Reforms are not always good, and change is not always in the interest of better learning. Healthy resistance is sometimes what we most need, side by side with thoughtful proposals for change—and this is what we will sorely miss if teachers' unions are defeated by the relentless hostility of their many opponents. ●

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A Friendly Drink in a Time of War

Paul Berman

A FRIEND LEANED across a bar and said, “You call the war in Iraq an antifascist war. You even call it a left-wing war—a war of liberation. That language of yours! And yet, on the left, not too many people agree with you.”

“Not true!” I said. “Apart from X, Y, and Z, whose left-wing names you know very well, what do you think of Adam Michnik in Poland? And doesn’t Vaclav Havel count for something in your eyes? These are among the heroes of our time. Anyway, who is fighting in Iraq right now? The coalition is led by a Texas right-winger, which is a pity; but, in the second rank, by the prime minister of Britain, who is a socialist, sort of; and, in the third rank, by the president of Poland—a Communist! An ex-Communist, anyway. One Texas right-winger and two Europeans who are more or less on the left. Anyway, these categories, right and left, are disintegrating by the minute. And who do you regard as the leader of the worldwide left? Jacques Chirac?—a conservative, I hate to tell you.”

My friend persisted.

“Still, most people don’t seem to agree with you. You do have to see that. And why do you suppose that is?”

That was an aggressive question. And I answered in kind.

“Why don’t people on the left see it my way? Except for the ones who do? I’ll give you six reasons. People on the left have been unable to see the antifascist nature of the war because . . .”—and my hand hovered over the bar, ready to thump six times, demonstrating the powerful force of my argument.

“The left doesn’t see because —” thump! — “George W. Bush is an unusually repulsive poli-

tician, except to his own followers, and people are blinded by the revulsion they feel. And, in their blindness, they cannot identify the main contours of reality right now. They peer at Iraq and see the smirking face of George W. Bush. They even feel a kind of *schadenfreude* or satisfaction at his errors and failures. This is a modern, television-age example of what used to be called ‘false consciousness.’”

Thump! “The left doesn’t see because a lot of otherwise intelligent people have decided, a priori, that all the big problems around the world stem from America. Even the problems that don’t. This is an attitude that, sixty years ago, would have prevented those same people from making sense of the fascists of Europe, too.”

Thump! “Another reason: a lot of people suppose that any sort of anticolonial movement must be admirable or, at least, acceptable. Or they think that, at minimum, we shouldn’t do more than tut-tut—even in the case of a movement that, like the Baath Party, was founded under a Nazi influence. In 1943, no less!”

Thump! “The left doesn’t see because a lot of people, in their good-hearted effort to respect cultural differences, have concluded that Arabs must for inscrutable reasons of their own like to live under grotesque dictatorships and are not really capable of anything else, or won’t be ready to do so for another five hundred years, and Arab liberals should be regarded as somehow inauthentic. Which is to say, a lot of people, swept along by their own high-minded principles of cultural tolerance, have ended up clinging to attitudes that can only be regarded as racist against Arabs.

“THE OLD-FASHIONED LEFT used to be universalist—used to think that everyone, all over the world, would some day want to live according to the same fundamental values, and ought to be helped to do so. They thought this was especially true for people

in reasonably modern societies with universities, industries, and a sophisticated bureaucracy—societies like the one in Iraq. But no more! Today, people say, out of a spirit of egalitarian tolerance: Social democracy for Swedes! Tyranny for Arabs! And this is supposed to be a left-wing attitude? By the way, you don't hear much from the left about the non-Arabs in countries like Iraq, do you? The left, the real left, used to be the champion of minority populations—of people like the Kurds. No more! The left, my friend, has abandoned the values of the left—except for a few of us, of course.”

THUMP! “ANOTHER REASON: A lot of people honestly believe that Israel's problems with the Palestinians represent something more than a miserable dispute over borders and recognition—that Israel's problems represent something huger, a uniquely diabolical aspect of Zionism, which explains the rage and humiliation felt by Muslims from Morocco to Indonesia. Which is to say, a lot of people have succumbed to anti-Semitic fantasies about the cosmic quality of Jewish crime and cannot get their minds to think about anything else.

“I mean, look at the discussions that go on even among people who call themselves the democratic left, the *good* left—a relentless harping on the sins of Israel, an obsessive harping, with very little said about the fascist-influenced movements that have caused hundreds of thousands and even millions of deaths in other parts of the Muslim world. The distortions are wild, if you stop to think about them. Look at some of our big, influential liberal magazines—one article after another about Israeli crimes and stupidities, and even a few statements in favor of abolishing Israel, and hardly anything about the sufferings of the Arabs in the rest of the world. And even less is said about the Arab liberals—our own comrades, who have been pretty much abandoned. What do you make of that, my friend? There's a name for that, a systematic distortion—what we Marxists, when we were Marxists, used to call ideology.”

Thump! “The left doesn't see because a lot of people are, in any case, willfully blind to anti-Semitism in other cultures. They cannot get themselves to recognize the degree to

which Nazi-like doctrines about the supernatural quality of Jewish evil have influenced mass political movements across large swaths of the world. It is 1943 right now in huge portions of the world—and people don't see it. And so, people simply cannot detect the fascist nature of all kinds of mass movements and political parties. In the Muslim world, especially.”

Six thumps. I was done. My friend looked incredulous. His incredulity drove me to continue.

“And yet,” I insisted, “if good-hearted people like you would only open your left-wing eyes, you would see clearly enough that the Baath Party is very nearly a classic fascist movement, and so is the radical Islamist movement, in a somewhat different fashion—two strands of a single impulse, which happens to be Europe's fascist and totalitarian legacy to the modern Muslim world. If only people like you would wake up, you would see that war against the radical Islamist and Baathist movements, in Afghanistan exactly as in Iraq, is war against fascism.”

I grew still more heated.

“What a tragedy that you don't see this! It's a tragedy for the Afghanis and the Iraqis, who need more help than they are receiving. A tragedy for the genuine liberals all over the Muslim world! A tragedy for the American soldiers, the British, the Poles and every one else who has gone to Iraq lately, the nongovernmental organization volunteers and the occupying forces from abroad, who have to struggle on bitterly against the worst kind of nihilists, and have been getting damn little support or even moral solidarity from people who describe themselves as antifascists in the world's richest and fattest neighborhoods.

“What a tragedy for the left—the world-wide left, this left of ours which, in failing to play much of a role in the antifascism of our own era, is right now committing a gigantic historic error. Not for the first time, my friend! And yet, if the left all over the world took up this particular struggle as its own, the whole nature of events in Iraq and throughout the region could be influenced in a very useful way, and Bush's many blunders could be rectified, and the struggle could be advanced.”

My friend's eyes widened, maybe in aston-

ishment, maybe in pity.

He said, "And so, the United Nations and international law mean nothing to you, not a thing? You think it's all right for America to go do whatever it wants, and ignore the rest of the world?"

I answered, "The United Nations and international law are fine by me, and more than fine. I am their supporter. Or, rather, would like to support them. It would be better to fight an antifascist war with more than a begrudging UN approval. It would be better to fight with the approving sanction of international law—better in a million ways. Better politically, therefore militarily. Better for the precedents that would be set. Better for the purpose of expressing the liberal principles at stake. If I had my druthers, that is how we would have gone about fighting the war. But my druthers don't count for much. We have had to choose between supporting the war, or opposing it—supporting the war in the name of antifascism, or opposing it in the name of some kind of concept of international law. Antifascism without international law; or international law without antifascism. A miserable choice—but one does have to choose, unfortunately."

My friend said, "I'm for the UN and international law, and I think you've become a traitor to the left. A neocon!"

I said, "I'm for overthrowing tyrants, and since when did overthrowing fascism become treason to the left?"

"But isn't George Bush himself a fascist, more or less? I mean—admit it!"

My own eyes widened. "You haven't the foggiest idea what fascism is," I said. "I always figured that a keen awareness of extreme oppression was the deepest trait of a left-wing heart. Mass graves, three hundred thousand missing Iraqis, a population crushed by thirty-five years of Baathist boots stomping on their faces—that is what fascism means! And you think that a few corrupt insider contracts with Bush's cronies at Halliburton and a bit of retrograde Bible-thumping and Bush's ridiculous tax cuts and his bonanzas for the super-rich are indistinguishable from *that*?—indistinguishable from fascism? From a politics of slaughter? Leftism is supposed to be a reality principle. Leftism is supposed to embody an ability to take in the big picture. The traitor to the left is you, my friend . . ."

But this made not the slightest sense to him, and there was nothing left to do but to hit each other over the head with our respective drinks. ●

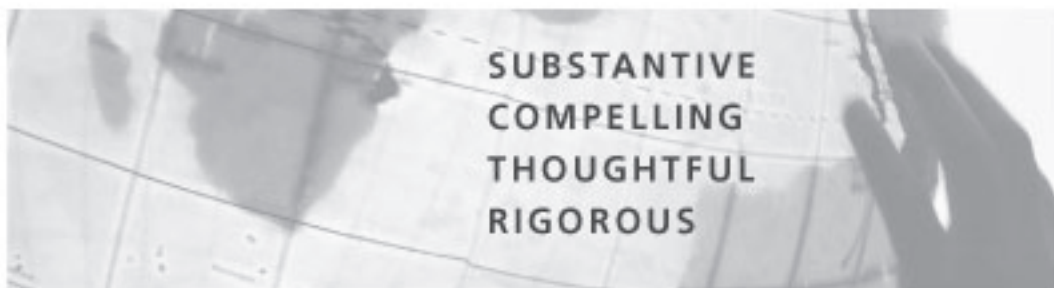
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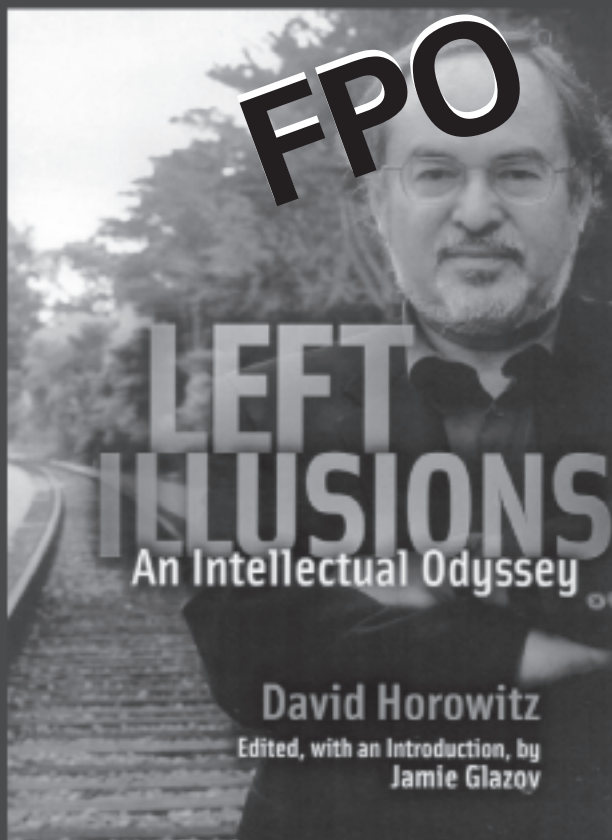
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Just and Unjust Occupations

Michael Walzer

HOW IS POSTWAR justice related to the justice of the war itself and the conduct of its battles? Iraq poses this question in an especially urgent way, but the question would be compelling even without Iraq. It seems clear that you can fight a just war, and fight it justly, and still make a moral mess of the aftermath—by establishing a satellite regime, for example, or by seeking revenge against the citizens of the defeated (aggressor) state, or by failing, after a humanitarian intervention, to help the people you have rescued rebuild their lives. But is the opposite case also possible: to fight an unjust war and then produce a decent postwar political order? That possibility is harder to imagine, since wars of conquest are unjust *ad bellum* and *post bellum*, before and after, and so, presumably, are wars of economic aggrandizement. These two are acts of theft—of sovereignty, territory, or resources—and so they end with critically important goods in the wrong hands. But a misguided military intervention or a preventive war fought before its time might nonetheless end with the displacement of a brutal regime and the construction of a decent one. Or a war unjust on both sides might result in a settlement, negotiated or imposed, that is fair to both and makes for a stable peace between them. I doubt that a settlement of this sort would retrospectively justify the war (in the second case, whose war would it justify?), but it might still be just in itself.

If this argument is right, then we need criteria for *jus post bellum* that are distinct from (though not wholly independent of) those that we use to judge the war and its conduct. We have to be able to argue about aftermaths as if this were a new argument—because, though

it often isn't, it might be. The Iraq War is a case in point: the American debate about whether to fight doesn't seem particularly relevant to the debate about the occupation: how long to stay, how much to spend, when to begin the transfer of power—and, finally, who should answer these questions. The positions we took before the war don't determine the positions we take, or should take, on the occupation. Some people who opposed the war demand that we immediately "bring the troops home." But others argue, rightly, it seems to me, that having fought the war, we are now responsible for the well-being of the Iraqi people; we have to provide the resources—soldiers and dollars—necessary to guarantee their security and begin the political and economic reconstruction of their country. Still others argue that the aftermath of the war has to be managed by international agencies like the UN Security Council—with contributions from many countries that were not part of the war at all. And then the leaders of those countries ask, Why are we responsible for its costs?

Whatever one thinks about these different views, the debate about them requires an account of postwar justice. Democratic political theory, which plays a relatively small part in our arguments about *jus ad bellum* and *in bello*, provides the central principles of this account. They include self-determination, popular legitimacy, civil rights, and the idea of a common good. We want wars to end with governments in power in the defeated states that are chosen by the people they rule—or, at least, recognized by them as legitimate—and that are visibly committed to the welfare of those same people (all of them). We want minorities protected against persecution, neighboring states protected against aggression, the poorest of the people protected against destitution and starvation. In Iraq, we have (officially) set our sights even higher than this, on a fully demo-

cratic and federalist regime, but postwar justice is probably best understood in a minimalist way. It is not as if victors in war have been all that successful at achieving the minimum.

The timetable for self-determination depends heavily on the character of the previous regime and the extent of its defeat. After the defeat of Germany in World War II, there was a four-year military occupation, during which many Nazi leaders were brought to trial and a general “denazification” was instituted. I don’t believe that any of the allied powers called for an early transfer of sovereignty to the German people. It was widely accepted that the neighboring states and all the internal and external victims of Nazism had this entitlement: that the new German regime be definitively post-Nazi. We can argue for a much quicker transfer of power in Iraq since the large majority of the population, Kurds in the north and Shiites in the south, were not complicit in Baathist tyranny, which seems to have had a narrowly regional and sectarian base. But the tyrannical regime is still being defended from that base, which means that “debaathification” is still a necessary political/military process, so that Iraqis participating in (what we hope will be) an open society, forming civil associations, joining parties and movements, making choices, don’t do so in fear of a restoration.

We don’t seem to have thought much about this process in advance of the war or to have carried it out, thus far, with anything like the necessary understanding of Iraqi politics or history. What is the relation of planned and unplanned occupations to just and unjust occupations? Surely occupying powers are morally bound to think seriously about what they are going to do in someone else’s country. That moral test we have obviously failed to meet.

But what determines the overall justice of a military occupation is less its planning or its length than its political direction and the distribution of the benefits it provides. If its steady tendency is to empower the locals and if its benefits are widely distributed, the occupying power can plausibly be called just. If power is tightly held and the procedures and motives of decision-making are concealed, if resources accumulated for the occupation end up in the hands of foreign companies and local favorites,

then the occupation is unjust. These *post-bellum* judgments are probably easier than the ones we are forced to make in the heat of battle; still, I want to make them explicit.

A JUST OCCUPATION costs money; it doesn’t make money. Of course, the occupying army, like every army, will attract camp followers; these are the scavengers of war, profiteering at the margins. In the Iraqi case, however, President Bush and his advisers seem committed to profiteering at the center. They claim to be bringing democracy to Iraq, and we all have to hope that they succeed. But with much greater speed and effectiveness, they have brought to Iraq the crony capitalism that now prevails in Washington. And this undercuts the legitimacy of the occupation and puts its putative democratic goals in jeopardy.

The distribution of contracts to politically connected American companies is a scandal. But would it make any difference if the United Nations were distributing contracts to politically connected French, German, or Russian companies? In both cases, there has to be someone regulating the conduct of the companies—not only their honesty and efficiency but also their readiness to employ, and gradually yield authority to, competent Iraqi managers and technicians. An international agency of proven impartiality would be best, but even American regulators, under congressional mandate, would be an improvement over no regulators at all. The combination of unilateralism and laissez-faire is a recipe for disaster.

A multilateral occupation would be better than the unilateralist regime we have established—for legitimacy, certainly, and probably for efficiency—but at this writing that does not seem a lively prospect. It is easy and right to argue for an authoritative role for the UN, but the argument is plausible only if the UN can mobilize the resources to take charge of Iraq as it is today. The countries that would have to provide the resources insist, however, that since this was an American war, America must bear the costs of the occupation—and also of political and economic reconstruction. This was a war of choice, they say, politically and morally unnecessary, and what one chooses in such

a case is the whole thing: the war and its aftermath, with all their attendant burdens. This is a good argument; many critics of the war made it even before the fighting began. *Jus post bellum* can't be entirely independent of *jus ad bellum*. The distribution of the costs of the *post bellum* settlement is necessarily related to the moral character of the war. But there is still a case to be made for the partial independence of the two and then for a wider distribution of the burdens of Iraq's reconstruction.

Whatever the prehistory of its achievement, a stable and democratic Iraq, even a relatively stable and more or less democratic Iraq, would be a good thing for the Middle East generally, for Europe and Japan, and (if it was involved in the achievement) for the UN. Given the likely benefits, why shouldn't the international community contribute to the costs of an occupation whose justice it could then guarantee? If the European Union had a larger sense of its global responsibilities, if its constituent states were really interested in modifying American behavior (rather than just complaining about it), they would make the contribution. But that is not going to happen. The Europeans want to share authority without shar-

ing costs; the Bush administration wants to share costs without sharing authority. It is possible to imagine a makeshift compromise between them but not a serious cooperation. These are opposed but equally untenable positions, and the result of the opposition is simply to confirm American unilateralism.

SO THE JUSTICE of the occupation is up to the citizens of the United States. These are the tests that the Bush administration has to meet, and that we should insist on: first, the administration must be prepared to spend the money necessary for reconstruction; second, it must be committed to debaathification and to the equal protection of Iraq's different ethnic and religious groups; third, it must be prepared to cede power to a legitimate and genuinely independent Iraqi government—which could even, if the bidding went that way, give its oil contracts to European rather than American companies.

It sometimes turns out that occupying is harder than fighting. ●

MICHAEL WALZER is co-editor of *Dissent*.

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God, Taxes, and “Public Reason”

Stephen L. Newman

THE REPUBLICAN GOVERNOR of Alabama, Bob Riley, stunned conservatives last year by pushing through the state legislature a tax reform plan that offered tax relief to the poorest in his state while significantly increasing the burden borne by wealthy individuals and corporations. It is unusual these days for a Republican politician to raise taxes on the privileged. What is truly remarkable in this instance, however, are the reasons Riley gave for his tax plan. He argued that the present tax system, which requires Alabamians with incomes under \$13,000 to pay 10.9 percent of their incomes in state and local taxes while those who make over \$229,000 pay just 4.1 percent, is un-Christian.

Riley is hardly a disciple of the liberal social gospel movement that in the nineteenth century championed a variety of redistributive and welfarist measures. On the contrary, his political track record, including his stint as a Republican representative from rural central Alabama, marks him as a member of the newly powerful religious right. His commitment to tax reform is a caution against treating religious scruples in politics—even those of a conservative Christian like Riley—as invariably weighted against progressive causes. Indeed, before the fact, it seemed highly possible that the religious rationale for tax reform would provide the necessary margin of victory for Riley’s plan when it went before the voters in September. Unfortunately, as the governor’s supporters later admitted, they did an abysmally poor job of getting their message out. Opponents of the plan—notable among them the leaders of the state’s Christian Coalition—seized on a provision to extend the sales tax to repairs of items such as cars and lawn mowers

to depict the reforms as a tax *increase* on working people. In the end, the Republican anti-tax gospel trumped Riley’s faith-based appeal for tax reform.

It might be thought that liberals would look kindly on Riley’s ill-fated Campaign for Tax Justice; however, there is an influential trend in contemporary liberal political theory that requires us to regard Riley’s biblically inspired case for tax reform with suspicion. Following the late Harvard philosopher John Rawls, many liberal thinkers argue that political discourse generally, or at least the language of politics spoken by public officials in their official capacity, must not invoke reasons for state action derived from what Rawls called “more or less comprehensive” religious or moral doctrines.¹ Instead, political discourse should consist in appeals to “public reason,” that is, arguments grounded in our shared commitment to constitutional fundamentals that are purely *political* in nature. Only in this manner, it is argued, can the liberal state enjoy the freely given allegiance of persons who subscribe to rival and incommensurate conceptions of the (theological or moral) good. The political conception of liberalism Rawls articulates is intended to be freestanding. Although in whole or in part it may enjoy support from an “overlapping consensus” of the reasonable (that is, mutually tolerant) religious and moral doctrines represented among the citizenry, its title to legitimacy does not rest on any one of them. Rather, a liberal politics properly conceived and grounded is neutral with regard to competing conceptions of the good life or the good society and must be capable of being affirmed for its own sake, independent of its congruence with some wider religious or moral point of view.

On this logic, Riley’s overt appeal to Christian ethics in support of his tax plan is illegitimate. In essence, he gave a private reason—a

rationale available only to those who share his faith—in place of a public reason available to all citizens regardless of their faith commitments. Had his plan succeeded on this basis, it would have identified the state with a particular religion by making Christian ethics the foundation of the state's tax policy. A sound rationale for public policy must be one that can be affirmed by all citizens, whatever their conception of the good. It must be grounded in the purely political purposes for which the state exists, because these limited (and limiting) principles of political life are the only ones that can reasonably be supposed to have the assent of all citizens.

The Rawlsian argument is modeled on liberal arguments for religious toleration in the seventeenth century. In its original context, the argument is undeniably powerful. Church establishments could hardly be said to have contributed to the legitimacy of the state through their persecution of religious dissenters. On the contrary, as John Locke warned his compatriots in 1689, religious persecution risks making rebels of conscientious men who merely desire to be left alone by the state to worship God as they see fit. Locke's *Letter Concerning Toleration* forcefully argues for a functional separation of church and state in which the former concerns itself exclusively with spiritual affairs while the latter concentrates on safeguarding civil interests. Government exists not to save souls, Locke insisted, but merely to secure life, liberty, and property. Political legitimacy hinges on government's restricting itself to its proper sphere of action. This would appear to rule out religious reasons for public policies, even when those policies serve a legitimate political purpose, as in the case of Governor Riley's tax plan.

AMERICAN SOCIETY in the twenty-first century boasts far greater religious and moral pluralism than seventeenth-century England. This sociological fact would seem to bolster the case for liberal public reason; greater diversity implies an even greater need than before to avoid reliance on particularistic and inherently controversial religious or moral beliefs in the justification of state action. But this wariness toward allowing reli-

gious and moral reasoning into political argument exaggerates its potential to undermine the legitimacy of public institutions. Locke's argument suggests that what is truly key is that public policies serve a legitimate civil interest and do not aim at securing a spiritual benefit. That's because the plurality of religious beliefs, together with their incommensurability, makes agreement on what constitutes spiritual benefit impossible. In contrast, it is relatively easy to achieve reasonable agreement on the ends of a secular liberal politics, which consist in peace and security of the person within a framework of entitlements (rights) that ensure everyone's civic equality.² And if it is conceded that the ends of a proposed policy are legitimate, what does it matter that the reasons given in support of the policy are private rather than public in Rawls's sense?

That the ends of policy be truly public is of the greatest importance. Were nominally "public" policies allowed to serve purely private ends it would subvert the egalitarian foundation of the liberal state. This is why the efforts of "special" interests to influence government policy have always aroused popular indignation in American politics. To the extent that government actions are seen to advantage one particular social or economic group at the expense of others, the legitimacy of the state is called into question. I don't mean that every legitimate public policy must provide equal benefit to all the citizens. Inevitably, there will be acceptable policies that have a differential impact on different constituencies. For example, environmental regulations applied to air quality will have a greater and more immediate economic impact on automobile manufacturers and hog farmers than they will on, say, university professors. But no one can reasonably deny that protecting the quality of the air everyone must breathe is a legitimate governmental objective. On the other hand, the public benefit of a direct government subsidy to car makers or hog farmers or (even) university professors invites suspicion. While such subsidies might in fact be defensible, it is incumbent upon their advocates to provide a suitably public rationale. Otherwise, opponents will feel justified in condemning them as an abuse of public authority for private gain.

Riley's application of Christian ethics to tax policy is hardly analogous to spending public monies on private projects. Taxes are necessary to fund the provision of public benefits, including government itself. It seems intuitive that justice requires taxes to be apportioned fairly across the entire population. Reasonable persons may of course dispute what constitutes a fair scheme of taxation. No matter. However participants in the fairness debate might rank the relative merits of a progressive income tax, no one can deny that it makes a legitimate candidate. Now, all sorts of reasons may be adduced in favor of progressivity, and Riley's argument from the standpoint of Christian ethics is on its face no less compelling than a secular argument relying on Rawls's "difference principle."³ Indeed, given the difficulty of Rawls's philosophical reasoning in contrast with the accessibility of popular religion, for the majority of Alabama's voters Riley's argument is very likely to be the more compelling of the two.

IT IN NO WAY diminishes the public character of the state's fiscal policy that Riley and conceivably a significant portion of Alabama voters viewed his tax plan as a practical expression of the biblical injunction to succor the poor. It would be a different story if Riley's plan gave preferential treatment to Christians; but the mere fact that a public official and ordinary citizens choose to interpret a legitimate governmental objective in light of their private religious convictions has no bearing on its political status. Nor did Riley's religious motives in introducing the tax plan undercut its legitimacy. So long as the policy objective is within the scope of the state's authority, its sponsors' motives are irrelevant. Again, it's the public purpose of the proposed state action and not the private reasons politicians and voters may have for supporting it that counts.

To demand that conscientious religious believers such as Riley suppress their true motives in order to fit their public statements to the requirements of public reason is grossly unfair as well as unnecessary. As Stephen Carter and others have recently complained, liberal insistence that political discourse employ secular language effectively turns consci-

entious believers into second-class citizens. They must disguise if not disown their true motives in order to gain a respectful audience from their fellow citizens. This can only breed cynicism and hypocrisy, neither of which is healthy for a democracy. Public reason must be judged a failure if its strictures compel reasonable men and women of conscience to choose between keeping a scrupulous silence or speaking insincerely.

There are theorists of deliberative democracy who argue that honest encounters between social groups committed to rival understandings of the good life is the best way of bridging their differences. Honest dialogue, it is suggested, will create shared understandings that transcend parochial disagreements, creating the possibility of a rational consensus on matters of public importance. Thus, contrary to the liberal conception of public reason, committed democrats might do well to introduce their private reasons into political debate. But perhaps this scheme expects too much of the deliberative process. In the end there can be no assurance that honest dialogue will produce a rational consensus, and the earnest quest for shared understandings might instead founder on the rock of parochialism. Happily, a rational consensus is not required in order to agree on political ends.

A person's religious beliefs may be "private" in the sense that they are shared at most with a subset of the political community. And then any appeal to the wider community rooted in those beliefs will invariably fall on deaf ears. The political art of building winning coalitions may perforce require conscientious believers to state their case in terms acceptable to those who do not subscribe to their faith. But it may sometimes happen (more often than not, I suspect) that a given political end is open to multiple descriptions. Riley's plan for a progressive income tax, for example, could be described in terms of a Christian duty toward the poor (as Riley himself described it) but also in terms of secular notions of justice and equality (as a Rawlsian liberal would describe it). So long as Christians and liberal secularists hold the end in common, and so long as what is proposed constitutes a legitimate governmental objective, it hardly matters that they defend it in

completely different ways. In fact, *intra*-group communication may frequently prove more important to achieving political success than *inter*-group communication. Rallying the disparate elements of a democratic coalition through parochial appeals to private reason may prove vital to generating majority support for a genuinely public policy.

DOES IT MATTER that the secular and religious proponents of the Alabama tax plan might not necessarily have recognized one another's reasons as persuasive? Rawls appears to believe that discursive dissonance of this sort leads to political instability, even where there is (temporary) agreement on policy outcomes. A genuine commitment to public reason and the (purely) political values it entails is required, in his view, to get beyond a mere *modus vivendi* that lasts only so long as each of the parties gets what it wants. In brief, shared ends are insufficient to anchor the liberal polity; there must be shared justifications as well. Implicit in this argument is certain hostility toward politics as it is normally understood and practiced. Rawls's notion of public reason hardly describes the horse-trading and deal-making that goes on at all levels of government. Appeals to private reason are sometimes necessary to mobilize groups of voters behind a public purpose. The charms of public reason are often too remote. The personal identities of democratic citizens run deeper than the common attributes of citizenship, and sometimes, at least, citizens need to understand how a particular measure connects to their deeper understanding of themselves in order to give it their support.

There are many people in the United States today who, like Riley, believe that in order to be good citizens they must also be good Chris-

tians (or good Jews, or good Muslims, or for that matter, good liberals). Private reason of this sort only becomes dangerous when it waxes tyrannical, that is, when it demands that *everyone* accept its precepts. By definition, private reason is not persuasive to everyone, and it cannot be imposed on the public without grave injury to the right of conscience. But theists do not violate the functional separation of church and state merely by explaining their own political stance in terms of their conscientious beliefs. And secularists need not concur in the reasons offered by theists in order to join them in supporting policy outcomes that they (the secularists) have good and sufficient reasons of their own to champion.

The beauty of a liberal democratic politics is that we do not all have to understand ourselves the same way or subscribe to a single conception of the good life or the good society in order to work together toward common ends. Liberals have not always been so fearful of allowing religious language to be spoken in the public sphere. On the contrary, throughout American history progressive causes have enjoyed support, often vital support, from religious constituencies that perceived the political stakes in light of their deep faith commitments. It is telling that Rawls struggles mightily (and in vain) to read Martin Luther King, Jr.'s passionate appeals for racial justice in a manner consistent with his own theologically neutral conception of liberal public reason. Far from attempting to deny the significance of King's religious oratory, liberals should once again learn to embrace it. There is nothing to fear from private reason wedded to a truly public end. ●

STEPHEN L. NEWMAN is an associate professor of political science at York University in Toronto.

1. According to Rawls, a comprehensive doctrine "includes conceptions of what is of value in human life, as well as ideals of personal virtue and character, that are to inform much of our nonpolitical conduct (in the limit our life as a whole)." See Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 175.

2. Locke and Rawls agree that in a hypothetical contract situation all rational persons will demand civic equality for

themselves and that all who are reasonable as well as rational will concede the same status to others that they demand for themselves.

3. The difference principle requires that the less advantaged members of society derive significant benefit from public measures that enhance the prospects of those who are more advantaged. It is an essential component of Rawls's theory of justice.

Numbers Games

Undercounting Unemployment and its Consequences

Amy Burke Shriberg

ALTHOUGH unemployment data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) have been less discouraging of late, the news would be far worse if the media reported the total number of Americans currently out of work. And if the number of Americans who are under employed or who work full time but earn poverty wages were reported widely on a regular basis, the U.S. economic outlook would appear worse still. Instead, the official unemployment rate reflects a rather narrow definition of unemployment and obscures debates that we should be having about the overall health of the U.S. economy and its ability to provide decent, family-supporting jobs to all its citizens. Arguments about how to calculate the nation's unemployment rate aren't new, but the issue has fallen off the public's radar screen in recent years. Most Americans accept that the unemployment statistic is what it purports to be: an accurate assessment of those looking for work.

Mainstream media devote little attention to the limitations of the official unemployment rate, especially during periods of growth. During recessions, articles examining deeper economic issues may appear, but they almost never address just how many Americans are left out of the count—and how many others aren't doing well by other measures. Many middle- and lower income Americans have a visceral understanding that the economy is worse than our official economists admit, but their knowledge is not reflected in the nation's unemployment statistics. Even during the boom years of the mid- and late 1990s, income inequality expanded for many Americans, and lower income Americans with less education enjoyed fewer opportunities for meaningful employment than

the headlines about record low levels of unemployment suggested.

The government first began collecting simple information about the nation's unemployed in 1880, but it wasn't until the Great Depression that efforts to collect unemployment statistics began in earnest. At the onset of that major calamity, estimates of the nation's unemployed were unofficial and varied, often provided by private agencies. Inaccurate information about just how many Americans needed jobs made it more difficult for New Dealers to craft coherent employment policies. The depression firmly established the critical importance of more precise data, and the government instituted the monthly Current Population Survey in 1940. The CPS is a sample survey of (currently) sixty thousand households from which the official unemployment rate is derived. It was originally administered by the Works Progress Administration (WPA), a New Deal work relief program that ceased to exist in 1943, and it is now cosponsored by the U.S. Census Bureau and the BLS. The depression also gave birth in 1935 to our unemployment insurance system, which continues to provide benefits for unemployed Americans lucky enough to qualify. The system operates largely at the state level but with federal oversight, and its benefits only partially replace wages. Many of the unemployed are ineligible for benefits. According to the Economic Policy Institute (EPI), only 38 percent of currently unemployed workers qualify for unemployment benefits.

So how does the BLS define unemployment? For starters, those interviewed are never asked directly whether they are unemployed. To be classified as officially unemployed, individuals must meet the following Bureau criteria:

They had no employment during the reference week; they were available for work at that time; and they made specific efforts to find employ-

ment sometime during the 4-week period ending with the reference week. Persons laid off from a job and expecting recall need not be looking for work to be counted as unemployed.

That leaves out many people without jobs who are available and want to work. These would-be workers, often the long-term unemployed, are left out of the official number if they have not sought work actively in the reference month—even though they may have spent months on a fruitless job search before giving up. Also left out are those working part time even though they would prefer full-time employment. The government does collect and publish this information, so it is there for people to find (if you know where to look for it), but it is almost never reported. Thus, when the official unemployment number is relatively low—as it was during the recent boom years—those interested in discussing poverty and the troubles confronting lower income Americans face an uphill battle. Policymakers and politicians consider low unemployment almost infallible evidence of economic health. Reliance on the official rate also stymies discussion of an expansive full-employment policy that would take into account the uncoun- ted unemployed and the under employed as well.

AN ORGANIZATION that works to highlight the discrepancy between the official unemployment rate and what is often called hidden unemployment is the National Jobs For All Coalition (NJFAC), which posts unemployment data each month after the BLS data are made public. In October (the latest figures available at this writing), the official U.S. unemployment rate was 6.0 percent or 8.8 million individuals. This marked a slight decrease from June's numbers, when the official unemployment statistic reached a more than nine-year high of 6.4 percent or 9.4 million individuals. Although the decrease may mark the beginning of an economic turnaround, growth remains sluggish in many sectors. To calculate hidden unemployment, the coalition includes BLS figures for those working part time because they can't find full-time employment. In October, 4.8 million Americans fell into that category. In addition, it also reports the number of people who want jobs

but who are not included in the official statistic because they do not qualify as actively looking. That figure amounted to 4.9 million individuals in October. Combining the official unemployment rate with these additional figures provides a more realistic picture of the U.S. economy: it increases the number of unemployed from 6.0 percent to 12.2 percent or 18.5 million persons for October, according to the coalition (the BLS doesn't calculate that figure although it provides the components to do so).

We get an even better picture of the very large number of Americans facing economic hardship if we add in those working full time yet earning poverty level wages. Based on Census Bureau data for the year 2000, 16.8 percent of those working fulltime, or 16.9 million individuals, earn less than the official poverty rate for a four-person family. In other words, about one in seven men and one in four women, employed full time all year, earned less than poverty level wages for a family of four.

In addition, the official unemployment figure excludes the incarcerated population from the labor force. During the 1980s and 1990s, the number of individuals held in federal and state prisons more than tripled, increasing from about 320,000 in 1980 to 1.3 million in 2000. And between 1980 and 2000 the total jail and prison population together increased from 503,586 to 1,937,482—a 284.7 percent increase, according to U.S. Bureau of Justice statistics.

The official unemployment rate has another flaw as well, namely that it is subject to the same under-coverage problems as all surveys are—and to any undercounting problems associated with the census from which CPS population controls are derived. Although efforts are made to correct for under-coverage, members of certain groups are more likely than others to be left out of census surveys. For instance, young black males are the most likely to be under- covered in the monthly CPS survey used to calculate the official unemployment rate. But they are not the only group inaccurately represented in the survey. Adjustments are made to correct for this under-coverage, yet the assumption is that members of the cohort left out of the survey resemble mem-

bers of the cohort who responded to the survey. There is no way for statisticians at the Census and BLS to know for certain whether this is true, according to Ed Robison, a BLS statistician. Although he can't prove it one way or the other, Robison's assumption is that some of the under-covered groups experience at least slightly higher rates of unemployment than their covered counterparts.

RATHER THAN developing a more broadly encompassing measure of unemployment, the BLS actually has narrowed the definition of those counted as officially unemployed over the years. It is interesting to note first how the BLS defines employment. Individuals are classified as employed if

they did any work at all as paid employees during the reference week [working as little as an hour qualifies]; worked in their own business, profession, or on their own farm; or worked without pay at least 15 hours in a family business or farm. People are also counted as employed if they were temporarily absent from their jobs because of illness, bad weather, vacation, labor-management disputes, or personal reasons.

By including those who worked as little as an hour during the reference week, the number of employed individuals is already inflated. On top of that, the definition of "unemployed" has changed over the years to include fewer and fewer individuals. Several changes were made in 1967 and 1994 that winnowed the number of those officially out of work—most notably by excluding discouraged workers, who have stopped looking for work—from the labor force.

During recent boom years, unemployment hovered at such low levels that economists began redefining what they considered to be the natural rate of unemployment, or the non-accelerating inflation rate of unemployment (the NAIRU), which is the amount of unemployment considered necessary to keep inflation stable. The official unemployment rate fell from about 7.5 percent in 1992 to a thirty-year low of 4 percent in 2000. Such low unemployment precluded discussions of public jobs programs and ongoing job shortages, as employ-

ers often scrambled to fill positions, even though many Americans remained unemployed or underemployed at the same time.

Debates about joblessness in non-recessionary times usually revolve around how jobs are distributed among the population of job seekers. What is often overlooked is the perhaps more significant issue of whether there are enough total jobs, whether good or bad, to go around. "Even in periods of general prosperity, there are not enough jobs to satisfy the needs of everyone who wants to work, and the burdens of this joblessness tend to fall disproportionately on disadvantaged population groups," says Rutgers University law professor Philip Harvey in "Responding to Rising Unemployment: Can We Afford Jobs for All?"

Indeed, there is plenty of evidence that even in good times a low unemployment rate masks an underlying job shortage, especially if we are talking about jobs that offer individuals with a high-school diploma or less access to family-supporting wages and benefits. The U.S. manufacturing sector, which once provided the bulk of such jobs for Americans without college degrees, has continued to be pummeled by globalization and the movement of those jobs abroad. In 2002, the U.S. trade deficit soared to its highest level of \$435 billion. Even during the most recent period of growth, the United States lost more than 2.4 million manufacturing jobs. White-collar jobs, such as computer programming positions, are increasingly being sent overseas as well, which raises further questions about the ability of the U.S. economy to provide enough jobs for its citizens.

Moreover, certain segments of the population have been disproportionately harmed by our current jobless recovery—although average job searches have lengthened across subgroups and regardless of individuals' educational background and previous work experience. A recent study by Northeastern University's Center for Labor Market Studies reveals that there are roughly 5.5 million young people who were out of school but jobless in 2002. The study, *Left Behind in the Labor Market*, documents a 12 percent, or six hundred thousand person increase, in the number of unemployed youths sixteen to twenty-four years old since 2000. Rather than boosting spending on youth pro-

grams, however, Congress cut more than three hundred million dollars last January for job training and youth employment programs.

One negative consequence of our system of officially underestimating the number of unemployed is that many people perceive the unemployment rate as synonymous with the number of jobs needed to employ everybody who wants to work. "The more important failing in the U.S. statistics is our failure to measure job availability for purposes of comparison with unemployment statistics," as Harvey says. To correct this, the BLS should measure the number of jobs that employers are ready and willing to fill. The BLS has recently begun a new survey, the Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey, which is designed to begin assessing the number of job openings in the country. While this is a start in the right direction, Harvey argues that more refined statistics are needed to evaluate how many full-time jobs are needed to employ all who want such jobs.

AS LONG AS there is a significant job shortage, it makes more sense to discuss how to increase the total number of jobs available rather than devoting scarce resources to trying to equalize the distribution of an insufficient number of jobs among different groups of Americans. This is unlikely while the official unemployment rate disguises the depth of unemployment and under employment plaguing the U.S. economy. It makes sense that the government would calculate the unemployment rate in such a way as to minimize the number of unemployed. But this poses severe problems for liberals and leftists

because many contemporary policy debates, such as those about welfare reform, unemployment benefits, tax cuts, and more, revolve around an often false understanding of the economy and the opportunities it provides during periods of economic expansion and recession.

The welfare reform bill enacted by Congress in 1996, for instance, is predicated on the notion that those in need should have to work, but there was little significant debate about whether the economy could provide enough jobs, especially with decent wages, to those forced off the nation's welfare rolls. The false idea that jobs await those who seek them undergirds the new welfare system, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, which requires most recipients to work to remain eligible for benefits.

It is time to shift the terms of the debate, so that policymakers address the needs of all Americans in search of decent work. If more of our citizens understood how many more of us are unemployed, even during the best of times, support for a permanent public jobs program—modeled perhaps on Roosevelt's WPA—might grow. Liberals might also be able to revive discussions of a full-employment agenda. Given the statistics as they are, and public knowledge about the economy as it is, we are left with a president and Congress whose only job creation proposals revolve around additional and continued tax cuts for the affluent and whose time in office has already coincided with the loss of at least 2.5 million jobs. ●

AMY BURKE SHRIBERG is a writer living in Ohio.

The Liberal Reach

Teaching Humanities to the Poor

Debra Satz and Rob Reich

WE TEACH political philosophy to the exceptional students who manage to cross over Stanford University's very high admissions bar. They read works by Plato, Aristotle, Mill, Kant, and Rawls, and in our experience they are shaken up frequently by their encounters with these and other thinkers. These students become more reflective about their values and newly aware of competing ways to live a life or to organize society. But can anyone take up these texts? Or should they be, as is increasingly the case nowadays, offered up only to a fortunate elite?

Three years ago we founded a program through Stanford's School of Continuing Studies and Program in Ethics in Society that brings classes in philosophy and the humanities to groups of fifteen to twenty female addicts and ex-convicts who have been placed, most of them involuntarily, in a residential drug and alcohol treatment program. Classes in recovery, anger management, and parenting consume most of their day. The women are a diverse lot, ranging in age from twenty to sixty. Although they reflect the ethno-racial mix of the Bay Area, they are homogenous in two ways: they come from poverty, and they have had little if any formal education beyond the high school level. Some have not even attended high school. The facility is called Hope House, and its energetic director, Karen Francone, believes in raising both the level of daily, practical functioning and the level of hope of the women she serves. We receive support from Stanford that allows us to offer college credit to women who successfully complete our classes.

In developing our class, we drew on the ex-

periences of others, especially the Clemente Course in the Humanities in New York City. Founded by Earl Shorris in 1995, the idea was to see whether laying the foundation for participation in economic and political life of society—by teaching analytical and conceptual skills, sharpening oral and written expression, and conveying forms of cultural and social capital often unavailable to the poor—could help the poor to understand and even step out of poverty. Shorris's initial course has now been expanded to more than a dozen sites and is coordinated through Bard College. Our Hope House program differs from the Clemente Course in that we have tried to integrate it into the academic mission of Stanford. It is taught exclusively by Stanford faculty, and undergraduates serve as writing tutors and course assistants. Both Stanford faculty and students sometimes work as mentors to the Hope House women after they complete their recovery program. As a result, the course is a catalyst for discussions about how the purposes of the modern university relate to larger public concerns.

The Class

The core of our program is an encounter with classic texts and enduring ideas. In class, we focus on works that reflect on social justice, ranging from Plato and Kant to the Declaration of Independence and Mill. We pair these texts with short stories and plays that illuminate particular issues such as gender inequality, the morality of war, and the obligations we owe to strangers. We run the class as a seminar, just as we would on campus, where students have to grapple with the texts themselves, discuss with each other their ideas, and are always asked to defend any conclusions they draw. Instead of expecting the Hope House women to defer to our "established authority" as professors, we encourage a dialogue that im-

PLICITLY recognizes the equality of all inquirers, assumes that we are all subject to error, and expects that we all have something to contribute. This teaching method engages everyone in a process of critical conversation in which each person has to examine and justify her own beliefs.

We can only offer a glimpse at what has occurred in our classes. The liberal arts resonated with the women of Hope House. More than that, the links they perceived between the texts and their lives brought new insights not just to them but to the professors and undergraduates working with them.

Take, for example, how Hope House women responded to Ursula K. Le Guin's short story "The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas." This utopian (or dystopian) parable tells of a hypothetical town in which the citizens are supremely happy. Their happiness, however, is founded on and dependent upon the suffering of a young child, who is kept in rags and imprisoned in a basement. Every year, at a ceremony celebrating the town's founding, the citizens may visit the child. The child initially implores the passing people for help but eventually becomes passive and silent. Aiding or freeing the child will cost the town its supreme happiness. So although all are horrified by what they see, most resign themselves to it. Every year some walk away and are never seen again: hence the title of the story.

Among our Stanford students, discussion immediately centers on those who walk away. Are these voluntary exiles heroes, because they refuse to continue living in Omelas? Are they cowards who assuage their own consciences but leave the child behind in misery? Our Stanford students identify with the town's citizens and ask, "Would we walk away? Are the exiles right to leave?" But no Stanford student has ever done what the women in Hope House did spontaneously—take up the perspective of the child in the basement. One of the women had herself been locked in a closet as a child by her father for long periods of time. All of the women could identify with a child who was "written off," abandoned, and left in poverty—and having identified with the child, they wondered if sacrificing oneself for the supreme happiness of others was a good thing. Would

they be willing to make such a sacrifice? Our students at Stanford conducted their inquiry against an unarticulated background assumption, in which the common viewpoint was of the town member. The women at Hope House looked at things with very different assumptions. (In fact, we had to work to help them see that there were perspectives to consider other than that of the child.) Some argued that sacrificing themselves for the happiness of others would be a noble thing. Hope House students asked, "What obligates one person to another? Is there something admirable in a Christ-like sacrifice for others? How can we understand the psychology of the child who ceases to protest?"

CONSIDER HOW Hope House students responded to Plato's *Republic*. They were struck especially by Plato's famous parable of a cave, in which prisoners are chained so that they perceive only shadows of the real world on the wall before them. They take the shadows for reality and are so accustomed to the darkness that they fear having to turn to the real world, to the light—to the sun. In our experience, no Stanford student has ever read this as a metaphor for addiction, but that is how the Hope House students saw it. For them, Plato's cave depicted the tyranny and blindness of drugs and provided an explanation for why it's easier to remain enslaved. This led in class to a conversation about the internal and external sources of self-delusion. Stanford students tend not to see themselves chained in the cave; the Hope House women identified with people who can see only shadows—who only wish to see shadows.

The women also drew on their life experiences when we discussed the ring of Gyges, another important passage in the *Republic*. Gyges wins both his queen and his realm by means of a ring that makes him invisible. An invisible person, Plato tells us, won't necessarily be virtuous. Following Plato, the women asked whether we would have any reason to act justly if we had the ring of Gyges and were invisible to detection. Most of the women thought that acting unjustly undermines your "relationship with yourself" and leads to guilt and low self-esteem. They recreated Socrates'

reasoning: injustice leads to a “dis-ordered soul.” However, some of the Hope House women resisted such “goody two shoes” conclusions and argued that without punishment people grab what they want.

A third example of how the Hope House students connected with famous texts centers on one of the oldest philosophical questions: is it ever justified to tell a lie? We read a small part of Kant’s famous treatment of this question in the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* along with an essay by Adrienne Rich called “Women and Honor: Notes on Lying.” Although we’d discussed the justifiability of “white lies,” just as we do with Stanford students, we found ourselves also asking more difficult (and larger) questions about whether deliberate lies about substantial matters can be justified. One woman suddenly shot her hand in the air and insisted that lying was not only sometimes *excusable*, but sometimes an *obligation*. She then explained how she had come to be at Hope House. She was riding in a car with a close friend when the police pulled the car over. Her friend had drugs with him and already had two prior convictions. Were the police to find them, it would be her friend’s “third strike,” and the result would be an automatic life sentence. In order to protect her friend, she falsely claimed the drugs were hers and took the rap, leading to jail and then to Hope House.

Her confession sparked a long discussion about whether or not her lie was justified and about the nature of obligations among friends. Some of the women insisted that even if lying was acceptable in this particular circumstance, she had also treated herself unjustly. Others argued that her friend was obligated—should have been “man enough”—to tell the truth. Finally, our student said that though she thought telling lies was usually hard to justify, an unjust context complicated matters. The three strikes law made lying acceptable in some way and perhaps required her lie. Her small injustice was preferable to the larger one, in her view, of incarcerating her friend for life for a small crime. The distinctions among telling lies to people for personal gain, damaging interpersonal trust, and lying in order to resist legal injustice became the center of the debate

and led to a short discussion of civil disobedience. To reach this point in a Stanford classroom, we typically resort to the example of the German who is harboring a Jew and is visited by the Gestapo. At Hope House, the women generated the same lesson from the cauldron of their own experiences.

Lessons at Hope House

Hope House revealed to us, the professors, the great potential the humanities have to bridge divides of class and race. These women experienced joy and self-confidence by participating in a democratic community of inquiry. “No one ever asked me my opinion before,” one woman said to us, “and if they had, they would never have followed that by asking me why.” “I was on the phone last night for an hour telling my daughter about Socrates,” said another woman. “I always thought that I was a ‘special ed’ student—I never dreamed I could read and understand Plato.” The liberal arts can—as the origin of their name from the Latin *liberalis*, to be free, suggests—help to liberate people and open new ways of grasping the world.

Is it banal to say that all of us are philosophers? What we, and other faculty who have taught at Hope House, continue to see is the precariousness of that idea. It is only true if we make it true; but we can continue to make it false, by denying the tools of reflection, the experience of beauty, and the love of wisdom to poor people. It is sad but not surprising that these women—poor, addicts, ex-convicts all—were amazed that they could read and argue about difficult and abstract texts that concern abiding moral and political questions. One woman expressed it this way: “I am part of the human race. I have the capabilities of everyone else if I put my mind to it. This class made it come true for me.”

We have begun follow up to find out how the women who have taken our classes fare afterward. These women face substantial hurdles when they leave Hope House, and the national statistics on re-incarceration are grim. Hope House, however, does far better than the national average, with some 70 percent of the women remaining drug free and out of prison. Ideally, these women would stay clean and also

be stimulated by our course to reconnect with education. A few of them have gone on to take other classes through Stanford's Continuing Studies program. We also know that our class gives them a new sense of confidence in themselves and their futures because they explicitly say so when they talk about their struggles with addiction. They talk about Plato's cave and "turning the eye of the soul to the light" as a necessary step to recovery. They also express a new self-confidence as a result of having completed a college-level class.

The Value of the Humanities

The liberal arts are in steep decline. Today all students—even the most elite—are subject to a standards movement in the public schools that means, in most cases, never ending multiple-choice assessments. Even when some students are lucky enough to have access to a liberal arts education, fewer and fewer are taking advantage of it. The number of liberal arts majors has dropped precipitously in the past generation. In this context, a radical way to defend the humanities is to start off with their value to the poor.

"Why teach the humanities to a bunch of junkies?" we have been asked. "You're just liberal do-gooders who think that what's interesting to you—philosophy—will be interesting to everyone." "This is a way to make you professors feel better about your own consciences; I doubt it does anything good for your students." It's easy to be cynical about programs like the Hope House Scholars or the Clemente Course. It is also easy to be skeptical of the motives behind those of us who teach in them.

It's unlikely that we will ever be able to quantify what the humanities teach people. Long-term, hard, direct evidence of success—lower recidivism rates at Hope House or better job placement as a result of our course—is not likely to be found. We simply don't know whether our course has these causal effects, even if they could be documented through statistics.

So, is the Hope House Scholars Program a wasted effort? Just a vanity project for elite professors? We harbor no illusion that education alone can eradicate poverty. But we also believe that the value—and power—of a liberal arts education is overlooked in debates about poverty. "I feel like a butterfly drawn from a cocoon," reported one of our students at the end of the course. Programs like Hope House help her escape and imagine herself as a participant in civic life. One Stanford student told us that tutoring at Hope House was *her* most profound *educational* experience as an undergraduate. It seems that through the humanities, the most elite and the most marginal segments of our society can teach something to each other. ●

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ROB REICH is assistant professor of political science and Ethics in Society at Stanford University. He is the author of *Bridging Liberalism and Multiculturalism in American Education*.

"AMENDMENT I

Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press."



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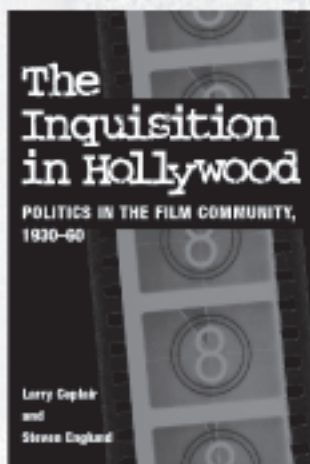
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“I Dream of the Day When . . .”

Naguib Mahfouz in the Life of an Israeli Friend

Sasson Somekh

EVEN AS A TEENAGER, I had been familiar with the name Naguib Mahfouz. I first heard of the Egyptian novelist in 1949 in Baghdad; he had recently completed two important novels, *Khan al-Khalili* (1946) and *Midaq Alley* (1947), named after the colorful, ancient back streets of Fatamid Cairo. A circle of very young Iraqi writers with whom I kept company back then was divided over the question of Mahfouz's place in Arabic literature. Some saw him as a serious novelist and an impressive “sociologist”; others dismissed him because they thought he was not modernist enough. His writing leaned toward nineteenth-century European naturalism; but in the middle of the twentieth century, so claimed his detractors, many decades after Joyce and Proust, there was nothing remarkable in writing realistic-psychological novels. I sided with the detractors, even though I had not read his works; perhaps I had glanced through them, but I had not actually finished a single one. My one great love then was modern poetry. I was about sixteen years old; those were my final days in Baghdad.

After I arrived in Israel in 1951, I lost contact with Arabic literary life, and for the next few years I gleaned only tidbits of information about famous writers and major innovations. In 1955, I read Mahfouz's *Beginning and End*, which first appeared in Cairo in 1951 and was reprinted in Israel four years later. I cannot say that this novel excited my imagination. In those days I was a true believer in literary commitment and even more strongly in revolutionary activity of the orthodox-Marxist sort. I felt that revolutionary passion was lacking in this novel. Mahfouz described Egyptian society's lower and middle classes, identifying with the op-

pressed, but without pointing to the source of oppression—capitalist and colonialist exploitation. I was disappointed not to find a “positive hero” symbolizing the “world of tomorrow.” From my left-wing perspective, Mahfouz was not much of a cultural hero; he had definitely not attained a place of honor in the pantheon of our literary idols, reserved for luminaries such as Gorky, Brecht, Anderson-Nexoe (the Dane), Aragon, Neruda, Hikmet, and so on.

During my first years in Israel, I could not follow what was taking place in Arabic literature, including the great advance in Mahfouz's stature after the publication of *The Cairo Trilogy* and his winning the Egyptian National Prize. I had no knowledge of the publication of his allegorical novel *Children of Our Alley*, which was serialized in the Cairo daily *al-Ahram* in late 1959. Nor was I aware of the virulent attacks leveled against this work, even before the serialization was completed, in Islamic circles (especially by certain sheiks at al-Azhar theological college). Their claim was that the novel insults the Prophet Muhammad, as well as other prophets, by presenting them as crude, licentious thugs. (Forty years later, the novel has not come out in book form in Egypt; but there is a Lebanese edition of it.)

IN OCTOBER 1965 I was accepted as a doctoral candidate in the field of Arabic literature at Oxford University. The first encounter with my future adviser, Dr. Muhammad Mustafa Badawi, was a turning point in my life. Badawi had recently arrived in England from Alexandria, where he had lectured in English literature. As our meeting approached, I was overcome by apprehension. How would an Arab professor relate to an Israeli? Why should he agree to accept me as one of his students in Arabic literature when my studies (in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem) had concentrated on Hebrew and general linguistics? In which lan-

guage should I converse with him: colloquial Arabic, formal Arabic, or English?

Once inside Badawi's modest office, my fears vanished. We spoke a mixture of English and Arabic. When I mentioned that I was an Israeli, he responded, "Who asked you?" When I added that I had previously majored in linguistics and not in Arabic literature, Badawi replied with a twinkle in his eye, "Linguistics comes in handy." He suggested Mahfouz as a subject for my dissertation (modern Arabic poetry would have been my first choice). Not very enthusiastically I promised to look into it, and then walked over to the library at the University's Oriental Institute to borrow the volumes of *The Cairo Trilogy*. I immersed myself in its two thousand pages. When I finished reading, I had found a topic.

The *Trilogy* was to all intents and purposes a continuation of Mahfouz's "social" works on Cairo; but in contrast to his earlier novels, which I thought "static," the *Trilogy* flowed with pulsating energy. It wove a tale around three generations extending from 1917 to 1943, the years in which Cairene society went through a staggering metamorphosis from a "medieval" patriarchal society to a new activism-oriented generation that included communists and Muslim radicals. To a great extent the *Trilogy* resembled the family saga of western literature, especially Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks*, a book that undoubtedly influenced the author. What impressed me most was the cadence, the rhythm that speeded up the longer we accompanied the characters in time. This tempo is felt not only in the plot structure and the characters' personalities, but also in the language. For someone trained in linguistics, I was attracted, indeed hypnotized, by this stylistic feature, namely the correlation between the rhythms of reality and the linguistic texture of the work. I devoted many years to studying it. *The Changing Rhythm* was the title of my book on Naguib Mahfouz, based on my dissertation and published in Holland in 1973.

WHILE I WAS WRITING my dissertation, the Middle East was shaken to its roots by a fierce storm. The Six-Day War erupted in June 1967, and in its aftermath Arab messianic nationalism, in its Nasserist

guise, began to wane (and in its place appeared Jewish messianic nationalism in its *Gush Emunim* or "Greater Israel" manifestations). I was nestled in a gray, drizzly English town studying the novels of an author who hailed from a country that my people were bitterly engaged in fighting, overpowering, and, to my dismay, humiliating. What am I doing here so far away? I asked myself. Why am I dealing in stylistic complexities and fictional meanderings, when in my homeland a violent conflict rages that for better or worse will determine our future?

And what of "my" author, Naguib Mahfouz? What are his political views? What is his attitude toward Israel and Israelis? How would he react if he heard that an Israeli was doing research on his novels? At that time, Mahfouz rarely expressed his views on political issues. When he did speak out, one could not differentiate him from other Arab intellectuals, none of whom desired, or dared, to challenge the nationalist tide.

Studying Mahfouz's works written at the zenith of the Nasserist years, I detected shadows of discontent and a sense of strangulation stemming from a profound distaste for any type of dictatorial rule and one-party government. But I found nothing to suggest that he actually opposed the Ra'is' policy vis-à-vis Israel. For this reason, and out of a desire not to place him at risk (lest he be accused of contact with the enemy), I refrained from writing to ask him questions about his life and work. British friends of mine who frequently traveled to Egypt were willing to relay some sort of message, but I resisted the temptation.

Only after I had completed my doctoral thesis, and another catastrophic war had bloodied our two countries in 1973, did I begin receiving information about Mahfouz's "unorthodox" political views. Immediately following the Yom Kippur War, Mahfouz made an extraordinary declaration about war and peace that *al-Ahram* published. He called for a decisive focus on domestic, economic, and scientific development and charged that the "financial assets" available for this work were "piling up in foreign banks."

Even before the war, in April 1972, Mahfouz had participated in an *al-Ahram* sponsored symposium that included

Mu'ammār Qaddāfi, then the young and irascible leader of Libya. Mahfouz and the veteran authors Tawfiq al-Hakim and Husayn Fawzi used such terms as "negotiations" and "peace" with reference to Israel. This infuriated Qaddāfi, who apparently demanded an apology from Muhammad Hasanein Haykal, the editor of *al-Ahram*. It is worth quoting a few sentences from Mahfouz's description of this remarkable episode, written twenty years after the event:

" . . . war is not an option [I said]. We must choose a different path, the path of negotiations. We find ourselves in a no-war-no-peace situation that has no parallel in history, and its consequences may be far more disastrous for us."

Qaddāfi replied: "We may forgive you for what you have just uttered. The Arab leaders' sluggishness certainly encourages defeatist ideas like these!" Haykal intervened in an attempt to change the subject . . .

In a 1975 interview published in the Kuwaiti newspaper *al-Qabas*, Mahfouz expressed himself in an exceptionally outspoken manner. One of his statements that particularly enraged many in the Arab world's elite was that peace is more important than land, and that land could even be surrendered in exchange for peace.

Following the torrent of criticism directed against him, Mahfouz began softening his formulations, expressing himself in a way that would not offend his Arab readers, but neither did he alter the essence of his vision nor apologize for any of his statements. It comes as little surprise, then, that with the start of the peace process, after Anwar el-Sadat's sudden visit to Israel, and through the signing of the Camp David agreement, Mahfouz was counted among the most ardent proponents of these accords. Later, Arab opponents of a settlement with Israel charged that his support of Sadat's peace initiative was in keeping with his "innate submissiveness," which prompted him to follow the leader, any leader, and give him support. In defense, he replied,

The reverse is true. In fact, it was Sadat who supported me. My attitude towards negotiations was common knowledge even before

Sadat came to power and before he accepted the principle of a diplomatic solution When I announced that we must initiate talks, I did anticipate being bitterly denounced. Yet I never wavered from my position because I believed that first and foremost it was in Egypt's and the Arabs' interest to achieve peace; and I knew that the War of Attrition [between Egypt and Israel from 1968-1971] had been sheer nonsense. Prolonged military confrontation . . . will impoverish our resources and strength, while retarding our march to civilization by at least a hundred years. Why in the world should we not seek peace?

Peace with Israel was a fundamental principle from which Mahfouz would not budge, despite the ostracism and scathing condemnation he suffered for several years. Nevertheless, he was also capable of vituperatively criticizing Israel during the war in Lebanon (1982) and the intifada. But he remained unshaken in his dream of sound neighborly relations and in his criticism of those who dreaded peace. In one of his fairly recent pronouncements he declared,

If Israel has a literature, I will read it and judge for myself if it is good or bad. But there are those who fear this and claim "If we have commercial relations with Israel, then she will overpower us; and if Israel introduces her culture, she will destroy us." [I say] these people have lost their sanity, their intellectual courage, and their self-confidence . . .

IN 1973, when the English version of my study of Mahfouz appeared in Holland, I asked my publisher to send a copy to his address at *al-Ahram*. For some reason he never received the book. But a Palestinian professor Xeroxed the entire book at the American University in Beirut and sent it to him. I learned about this from an interview between Mahfouz and the Egyptian novelist and journalist Gamal al-Ghitani, published in the Baghdad newspaper *al-Jumhuriyya*:

Recently, Professor Muhammad Yusuf Najm handed me a photocopied edition of a scholarly work by a lecturer from Tel-Aviv University named Sasson Somekh. This is by far the most serious research carried out on the *Trilogy*. The scholar deals with the different criti-

cal appraisals regarding this work, and arrives at the conclusion that at the base [of the *Trilogy*] is Man versus Time. The truth is that I was amazed at the researcher's accuracy and profound understanding. This shows us the extent to which [the Israelis] are interested in what is happening on our side . . .

IN 1977, FOLLOWING Sadat's historic flight to Jerusalem, Israeli journalists began visiting Egypt and meeting with politicians, artists, and writers. Several of these journalists were themselves well-known Israeli writers, for example the poet Haim Gouri and the novelists Aharon Megged and Yitzhak Ben-Ner. During their visits to the *al-Ahram* building in Gala' Street, a few of them met Naguib Mahfouz in his small office on the fifth floor ("the writers' floor"). They naturally discussed the peace process with him, and heard him enumerate the great blessing that would emerge for the region's nations when peace finally reigned. These ideas were, and remained, permanent and unalterable components of Mahfouz's thinking.

At the end of September 1979 I finally wrote to him. My letter was dispatched via the Israeli journalist Aharon Barnea, who returned from Cairo with Mahfouz's reply—a lengthy, warm letter written on October 20, 1979. The novelist reiterated his opinion of what I had written about him in my English book, and this time he added,

I thank you for your appraisal of the role I fulfilled in Arabic literature, but I hope you have not overstated my merits. . . . Let us pray together that the efforts being made today will be crowned with success, and that our two nations will return to the fruitful path of co-existence, as in days of old. . . . Our two nations have known creative co-operation in ancient times, in the Middle Ages, and in the modern period, while the periods of conflict and dispute have been few and far between. But, to my great sorrow, we have over-chronicled the moments of conflict a hundred fold more than we have recorded long generations of friendship and partnership. I dream of the day when this region will be transformed through our mutual cooperation, [and become] a dwelling-place radiating the light of science, inspired by the highest divine principles.

I would have immediately packed up and left for Cairo to meet him, but entrance visas to Egypt were given primarily to diplomats and journalists, and I did not belong to either category. Only in early 1980, while I was on sabbatical in Oxford, did the long-awaited visa arrive. I caught a night flight to Cairo. The next morning I phoned Mahfouz at his home. His wife answered and upon hearing my name welcomed me warmly. Her husband had gone out for his morning stroll but would call as soon as he returned. "He's been waiting for you for quite some time," she added. I bided my time back at the hotel, and when the phone rang I heard the velvety voice of Mahfouz. A few hours later I was seated in his apartment in the Agouza quarter on the banks of the Nile. On my return to the hotel I jotted down the following:

January 14, 1980, 6 P.M.—Visited Naguib Mahfouz at his apartment. He is thin and fragile. Extremely cordial, just as I imagined through all the indirect contact I had with him up till now. He and his wife displayed unquestionable amity. I spoke with him for two hours on everything under the sun; in the end he handed me a gift, his two latest books. . . . We didn't discuss political matters, but at one point I mentioned that I had always admired him for never having lapsed into a hatred of Israel, not even during the darkest hours of the conflict. His reply was, "I have viewed the conflict as a tragedy destructive to both sides." Among other things, Mahfouz . . . expressed a great liking for a story by Agnon, of all people. This is only a first meeting (I hope).

I met him every day during my week's stay in Cairo, and the topics of our conversations grew to include not only literary and political matters but also personal experiences. Mahfouz was especially interested in my Jewish-Arab background, my family's history in Baghdad, and the way I had mastered the Hebrew language after arriving in Israel. He would frequently ask me about the similarity between Hebrew and Arabic. During one of our discussions I inquired about the ban the Arab League had placed on his work after he made public his support of the Middle East peace process. He did not seem upset by it, but he did express anger at Arab publishers, especially in

Lebanon, who had exploited the prohibition in order to churn out pirated editions of his novels. When I asked whether his burgeoning contact with Israeli critics and writers would hurt him, he calmed me though he admitted that certain Egyptian and Arab literary critics who used to write about his works were now avoiding him because of the public praise he lavished on Israeli literary scholarship. Some of them had stopped reviewing his new books altogether. But, he believed, this was only a temporary phenomenon.

During the following years I often visited Mahfouz in Cairo. The Egyptian press was vitriolic about the cordial relations evolving between the great writer (partially banned) and his Israeli guests; these attacks intensified in 1982 following the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the brutal siege of Beirut. During one of my visits to Cairo in 1983, I invited Mahfouz to Israel to participate in a conference being held at Tel Aviv University upon the inauguration of a chair in Arabic literature. He apologized and explained that he could not visit Israel because he never traveled abroad. The day after our conversation, however, Mahfouz handed me a congratulatory letter he had written on his own initiative, and he requested that I pass it on to Professor Moshe Mani, the president of my university. The letter was read during the ceremony in April 1983 and published in the newspapers. His support roused angry responses in Egypt. The following comment appeared in an article published by a noted Egyptian novelist, Yusuf al-Qa'id, in the Cairo monthly *al-Mawqif al-'Arabi* under the title "The Israeli Enemy Does Nothing But Perpetrate Aggression and Naguib Mahfouz Does Nothing But Congratulate the Enemy!":

We naively believed that Naguib Mahfouz had recovered from the Israeli disease, and we imagined that the man would now turn over a new leaf, and that we should help him inscribe the first word on this new page. However it seems that all these expectations were illusory, and the man is still gambling on the Israeli enemy, the nemesis of Egypt, the Arab world, one hundred million Arabs—yesterday's enemy, today's, and even tomorrow's.

It wasn't only Mahfouz's relations with Israelis or his undeviating support of peace that

produced such wrath. Many people, especially the Nasserites, were furious with him because of his high regard for Anwar el-Sadat, as expressed in his declarations and writing, especially in his book *Facing the Throne* (1983), which appeared after Sadat's death. Here he portrayed the assassinated leader as a prince of war and a champion of peace, as opposed to Nasser, who is depicted as someone who implicated his homeland in needless wars and military adventures.

MAHFOUZ WAS awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in October 1988, at a moment of intense political harassment and literary ostracism. I heard the announcement while I was at Princeton University in the United States. The world press received the announcement with surprise. Literary editors in U.S. newspapers went hunting for material on an Egyptian writer of whom they had never heard. Over the next few days, I gave many media interviews. I tried to evade political questions, restricting my comments to the essence of Mahfouz's works and his tremendous contribution to modern Arabic literature. Still, one reader of Arab background wrote to the *Washington Post* complaining that even when the Arabs were finally awarded an international prize, the western media turned to an Israeli scholar!

I sent my congratulations to Mahfouz, and received a reply typed on *al-Ahram* official stationery, for the newspaper now provided him with a private secretary. Preparations were underway in Egypt for a series of celebrations; among the invited guests were some of Mahfouz's harshest critics and detractors. On the other hand (and perhaps for the best) I was not called on to take part in any of the festivities. For months Mahfouz was caught up in the media circus that forced him to alter his quiet lifestyle. He had to appear before television cameras and journalists' flashbulbs several times a day. On my return to Israel from a longish sabbatical in the United States in December 1991, I stopped off in Egypt to celebrate his eightieth birthday, and I penned the following impression soon after:

To be near Naguib Mahfouz these days [is] a

trying experience. A frail, dejected man, a veritable broken vessel. The previous month he had been flown to London, almost forcibly, to undergo open-heart surgery. The operation apparently succeeded, but the patient did not completely recover. His body appears shrunk; his voice is practically inaudible, and worst of all, his legs are too weak to support his delicate frame, which means he can no longer take his daily walks along the bustling Cairo sidewalks that he loves so much. This has been the first time that I did not hear his deep, rolling laughter . . .

In the new opera house writers, diplomats and ambassadors gathered to mark [his birthday]. Local newspapers expressly noted that the Arab ambassadors would all participate. These are the ambassadors of countries that have boycotted and ostracized the Egyptian novelist in recent years for the sole reason that he supported peace and reconciliation with Israel.

I try to speak with him as usual about literature, but he exhibits no interest. The only subject that arouses a glint of excitement is the current peace talks between Israel and its neighbors. He fondly recalls the name of the late president, Sadat. After his death, Mahfouz said, his name began to slip somehow from the memory of the Egyptians, and it was anathema to many intellectuals who forgot that the man returned both honor and territory to his fatherland. Since the time of King Akhnaton, he adds, there has not been a leader of peace like him in Egypt, and history should remember him with veneration.

I did not ask him about his work as a novelist. That was a sensitive issue now. From the moment he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1988, his wellsprings of creativity almost completely dried up. His last work, *A False Dawn*, which appeared two years ago, included nearly twenty marvelous stories, crystal-clear and brimming with literary vigor, but all of them were written prior to 1988. The prize has forced the entire Arab world to recognize him as its greatest national writer; but it has deprived him of his *joie de vivre*.

The fact that during the last three years his works have been translated and published by some of the world's best publishing houses has left him, so it appeared, apathetic. Likewise, the scores of articles written about him all over the world do not attract his interest. On no

account is this due to conceit or contempt, but because the urge to write, or the capability, has deserted him.

Suddenly the literary boycott was lifted, and hundreds of writers, journalists and public figures throughout the entire Arab world made a pilgrimage to Cairo to express their friendship and admiration. Mahfouz neither reminded his past detractors about the ban they had placed on him nor did he demand any apologies. However, after several years, he was able to score a point when, in September 1996, the Jordanian writer and general secretary of the Arab Writers Association, Fakhri Qa'war, visited him in his office in the *al-Ahram* building. Qa'war had been among the most radical defamers of "renegades," and numerous boycotts of other Arab writers could be chalked up to his "credit." Leading the list was the great Syrian poet, Adonis, who had been expelled from membership in the Arab Writers Association because he had once met with Israeli writers and public officials. Qa'war asked Mahfouz, according to the *al-Ahram* reporter, if he was familiar with of the Arab Writers Association. Mahfouz spontaneously burst out laughing, "And how should I not be familiar with the association? I was expelled from its membership!"

ON SEPTEMBER 14, 1994, Mahfouz was brutally assaulted outside his house in Agouza by a Muslim fanatic, incited by men who wanted to punish Mahfouz for views they believed were contradictory to the essence of Islam. The attack came as a delayed response to his novel *Children of Our Alley* that was published, it will be recalled, in serial form in *al-Ahram* at the end of 1959—in other words thirty-five years prior to the assault. Although the Nobel Prize freed him from the venomous pens of those who opposed the peace process and despised Sadat, it nevertheless generated hysterical salvos from leading Islamic fundamentalists in his country. The Nobel Prize Committee had mentioned this forbidden novel in its rationale for granting him the award, which again brought the writer into the headlines and generated hundreds of hostile articles and several hate books against him. The blind sheikh Omar Abdul al-Rahman, one of

the most fanatic leaders of Egyptian fundamentalists and the mastermind behind the explosion in the World Trade Center in New York in 1993, had been seeking Mahfouz's blood since 1989. He even claimed that had he moved against him immediately after publication of the novel in 1959, Salman Rushdie (who was also "sentenced" to death for his literary work) would never have dared to write his *Satanic Verses*.

Mahfouz survived the assassin's attack, but his health was ravaged from a severe wound in his neck, and the nerves in his right arm and hand were so badly hurt that he lost the ability to hold a pen. He ceased writing altogether and refused to either dictate his thoughts or try adjusting to a custom-made computer (until the attempt on his life, he wrote a weekly column in *al-Ahram*). He repeatedly explained to his friends that for seventy years he had worked by gripping a pen between his fingers, that was how he had written all his books, and he could not change his habits at such an advanced age.

I did not see Mahfouz during the long months of recuperation and was able to visit him only a year later. He was quiet and withdrawn, although he would occasionally surprise me with a sudden reappearance of his old vivacity. As I held his swollen right hand, my wife ventured to ask him what I had not dared to. Does he not feel the urge to write? For a second, I thought that he did not hear the question, but after a brief silence he answered in a steady voice, "No, the desire to write comes to me the moment I sit at a table and hold a pen. That condition, however, no longer exists."

BETWEEN 1995 AND 1998 I lived in Cairo and served as director of the Israel Academic Center in that city. Founded in 1982, the center had been a topic of our conversations during the 1980s, and Mahfouz expressed support for its goal of nurturing cooperation between the Egyptian and Israeli academic communities. He was unhappy about articles in the Egyptian press charging that the center was the vanguard of a "cultural invasion" or an offshoot of Israeli intelligence. He had willingly met with all of its previous heads and encouraged Egyptian writers to visit its premises; but he himself refrained from actively

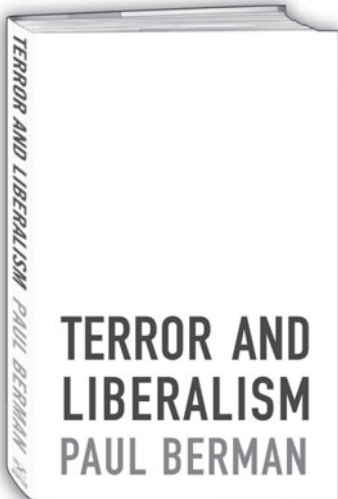
participating in its events. Once, though, he had promised that he would come if and when I became its director. But now, in 1995, I did not dare invite him. Since the assassination attempt, he had ceased going to "unsafe" places. He was not free to choose where he could visit; he was constantly accompanied by an armed bodyguard (for fear of another attempt on his life). Every time he went out, he was chauffeured from his home and back by one of his close friends. Even the telephone was not a useful means of communicating with him because of his poor hearing. In my first year in Cairo, I did not even try to meet him for fear that a stray journalist might spot us together and report it, providing ammunition for fanatics and malcontents. However, in the middle of 1996, a mutual friend told me that the novelist frequently asked about me, and would like to see me. I began visiting Mahfouz at places not patronized by journalists, for example the Sofitel Hotel, where he would come on occasion to meet his friends at a designated hour in the evening. In this manner we renewed our friendship.

He would sit among his companions talking and joking although he could not hear everything being said. Occasionally he would interrupt a conversation, add something, and to our great surprise his response was always on target, even if it was obvious that many details of the conversation had eluded him. When I tried to address him he did not always hear me, at which point an Egyptian colleague would intervene and "translate" my words in a louder voice. When we were left alone or in the presence of a close friend, he would start to reminisce about the years he was free to wander the sidewalks and sit in outdoor cafés on Tal'at Harb Street or on the banks of the Nile. He would recall mutual friends of ours who had passed away, such as the Israeli ex-general, Arabic scholar, and peace activist Matti Peled, who wrote about Mahfouz's works and knew him personally.

Toward the end of my term at the center, in July 1998, I made a farewell visit to the Sofitel. This time two Israeli friends, Ronit Matalon and Sami Michael, accompanied me. Michael, a prominent Israeli novelist, had translated Mahfouz's *Trilogy* into Hebrew. Mahfouz had

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"Paul Berman's 'Terror and Liberalism' is the most important political book this year."

— *Die Welt*

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wanted to read one of Michael's novels, but only a few pages existed in Arabic translation. In 1995 an Arabic version of Michael's novel *Victoria*, appeared in Cairo, but by then it was too late. Mahfouz was unable to read it because of his weakened eyesight. At most, he would find time in the morning to listen to one of his friends read newspaper selections.

This was Matalon's first meeting with Mahfouz. Born in Israel, her family hailed from Egypt, and her novels and short stories often reflected her Egyptian background. She was obviously very excited throughout the evening, especially as Mahfouz had received her with visible warmth. Before long Ronit lost her somewhat tense look, and we all fell into a friendly discussion, with Mahfouz's laughter enlivening the atmosphere and dissipating the gloom that had engulfed him earlier that evening. Toward eight o'clock our good friend 'Ali Salem, a well-known Egyptian playwright, arrived and reminded us that the final game of the World Soccer Cup would begin very shortly; he invited us, the Israelis, to watch the game with him on a large screen in a downtown hotel. I caught a glimpse of the face of Mahfouz's bodyguard, pleading that we wind up our meeting so that he too could watch the game. The writer Naim Sabri, Mahfouz's escort that evening, announced that he had to drive Mahfouz home and would catch up with us later at the hotel. We got the message and bid Naguib Mahfouz farewell. ●

SASSON SOMEKH is professor emeritus of modern Arabic literature, Tel Aviv University. A volume of his collected autobiographic sketches, *Baghdad, Yesterday* (in Hebrew) is to appear soon in Israel.

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The Other September 11

José Serra

I MET VOLODIA TEITELBOIN today, and he told me General Prats had resigned. He was replaced by the chief-of-staff.

General Pinochet?

That's right. Volodia thinks the change will strengthen the government and ward off the threat of a coup. He claims Pinochet is a legalist and that, though Prats is good, he has clearly fallen out of favor.

The topic of this conversation was the situation in Chile, and the information was transmitted by Luiz Carlos Prestes, secretary general of the Brazilian Communist Party, on August 24, 1973. I was visiting the Soviet Union, and I met him at his stark apartment in Moscow, where he lived in exile. Volodia was a senator and a leader of the Chilean Communist Party.

General Carlos Prats was the commander-in-chief of the Chilean army. I had already had the opportunity to meet him personally. He was an educated, conservative soldier who held democratic convictions and was solidly opposed to military intervention in the political sphere. General Augusto Pinochet was then the second highest-ranking army officer. A confidant of Prats, he had held the post of acting army commander on several occasions and had demonstrated a "legalist" approach to the turmoil that marked the Chilean political process.

Despite the soothing comments, I was convinced that a coup was only a matter of days away. Prats had resigned after a group of generals' wives had taken to the streets to protest against him. Instead of punishing the generals involved, he opted to resign. Another three generals in high-level positions decided to follow Prats's example. A pillar of Chilean legality had retired from the stage.

I decided to interrupt my trip to the Soviet Union and return to Chile, where I had lived in exile for more than eight years. My guess was that the coup would take place before September 18, Chile's National Day, when the military would be called upon to parade and salute President Salvador Allende. It seemed quite clear that such a demonstration of deference would not take place.

A few days after I arrived in Santiago and began to prepare my departure from Chile with my wife, Monica, and our two children, Monica woke me earlier than usual with the words *They have surrounded and are shooting at La Moneda!* In my entire life, I do not recall waking up as suddenly and lucidly—with my heart pounding—as on that fateful September 11, 1973.

The rumors broadcast on Santiago radio stations were confused but to the point: the coup had begun. Despite my conviction that it was inevitable, I was appalled. In 1964, I had gone through a somewhat similar experience in Brazil. It seemed almost incredible that what had been predicted was actually coming about and in as definitive a manner as possible.

I left the house, though I am not sure where I intended to go. Automobile and pedestrian traffic was congested and the tension in the air was palpable. In the midst of the bustle, I met an acquaintance—the Jesuit priest connected to the "Iglesia Joven," who had performed our marriage six years previously. Some time afterward, he left the priesthood and, curiously enough, had become my student in a graduate course.

I tried to get close to the seat of government, La Moneda Palace, though it was impossible to do so. At about noon, I could see smoke rising from the building from my vantage point a kilometer away.

The population was rapidly obeying the curfew orders being transmitted over radio stations

already in the hands of the conspirators. To remain in the street could mean imprisonment or even summary execution. Compared to the ferocity with which the Chilean military began hunting down its prey, the Brazilian coup of April 1, 1964, was really no more than a staid tea party.

Initially, it was not clear whether Pinochet, now the commander-in-chief of the army, had assumed command of the coup. However, the illusion of division within the Armed Forces was rapidly and very unpleasantly put to rest, when we listened to Pinochet's shrill and menacing voice introducing the military junta on the night of September 11. We later discovered that it was only on September 8 that Pinochet had been informed of the preparations for Allende's overthrow on the following Tuesday. On Sunday, unable to thwart the conspiracy, he decided to join it.

There is one fact that has received very little attention in Allende's fall from power. At the end of the week prior to the coup, the president had been preparing a speech to be delivered on the eleventh, when he was to announce a plebiscite to decide on his planned "reforms." The decision had been taken in agreement with the president of the Christian Democrats, the leading opposition party at the time. Were he to lose the plebiscite—which seemed quite probable—Allende would resign.

It is not difficult to imagine that, had Allende given the speech a week earlier, he may well have avoided the coup. In much the same way, it is quite possible that the military, fully aware of what was about to happen and fearful that tensions would be dissipated, decided to move the coup to an earlier date.

Patricia Verdugo's re-issued *Chile, Pinochet, and the Caravan of Death*, accompanied by a CD, reveals the discussions among military leaders on September 11. One radio station taped the discussions, and someone released the tapes twenty-five years later. The recording makes it very clear that despite Pinochet's rather late joining of the rebel forces, he was by far the most irate, brutal, and radical of the military leaders. Even his use of language sank to new depths of vulgarity.

At home, each of the *bandos* or *communiqués* released by the military junta

was greeted with intense expectancy. The broadcaster would go on the air and announce *Bando numero siete* (Communiqué number seven) and would then read off a list of names of persons who were to immediately hand themselves over to the first patrol they met on the street. Those who refused to do so would have to face *consecuencias fáciles de se prevee* (consequences easy to imagine). I remember a very tense moment when the broadcaster cited the name of Roberto Frenkel, a brilliant Argentine economist who, at the time, lived in Chile and worked with me. From that point forward, it was quite clear: the chance of my name's coming up on the list was growing.

General Eduardo Bonilla, second in command to Pinochet, went on television at one point to claim that there was a clandestine army composed of ten thousand foreigners in Chile, and demanded that the citizenry denounce all suspects. (Sometime later, Pinochet had Bonilla killed in a simulated accident.)

TWO FACTORS offered us some short-term protection. First of all, I was an employee of an international organization and had diplomatic immunity and an official visa in my Italian passport (I had obtained this passport because my father was an Italian citizen, and the Brazilian government refused to supply passports to those in exile).

Second, while I was in Europe, Monica had decided to move the family to a new neighborhood. For years, we had lived in a small villa. However, anonymous threats had become more common, probably from neighbors belonging to extreme right organizations, as it became known that I was in exile and that Monica's surname was Allende (though she was not a close relation to the president). The new house was in a different area of the city, and none of our neighbors knew yet who we were. This reduced the possibility of someone's informing on us.

The curfew was extended constantly. On the third or fourth day, when it was suspended for a few hours, I went to visit Herbert José de Souza Betinho—who was to become Brazil's most important civil rights leader in the eighties and nineties—to see how he was faring and

to get him out of his house. Betinho was a hemophiliac and would never have been able to withstand any type of physical abuse.

In his tiny apartment, he still kept letters, documents, address lists, and speculated about the possibility of resistance in the southern city of Concepción, led by Prats. I made a point of demonstrating my skepticism at that possibility and insisted that he leave his apartment at once. His address was extremely well known, and he had a subscription to *El Siglo*, the newspaper of the Chilean Communist Party. It was only a matter of hours before they would come for him.

Through the good offices of Carmen Miró, a Panamanian and director of the Latin American Center of Demographics, I sought out the ambassador of Panamá and convinced him to open his embassy (which in fact was no more than a small ground-floor apartment) to those seeking political asylum. The first three that I took to the Embassy were Betinho; Sandra Brisola, a student of mine at the school of economics; and another Chilean student, by the name of Glória, who then sympathized with the *Movimiento Izquierda Revolucionaria*, a left-wing movement that opposed Allende. In a few days, the small Panamanian Embassy came to shelter more than a hundred people, most of whom were Brazilians, who had to survive in harsh conditions and terribly cramped quarters.

Taking advantage of the fact that my car had diplomatic license plates, I was able to take food to the embassy on several occasions, passing it furtively through the windows. Later on, something rather curious occurred: the ambassador rented a more spacious house and transferred the asylum-seekers to it. The only problem was that the owner of the house was one of them. Theotonio dos Santos, a Brazilian professor and one of the intellectual gurus of the Chilean left, had become a political exile in his own house.

The first news of violence was not long in coming: Luis Ramallo, one of the directors of Flasco—the Latin American School of Social Sciences—found the body of one of our Bolivian students in an improvised morgue. His leg had been torn off by an artillery shell.

Ramallo, a sociologist and former Jesuit,

was a very courageous individual. He openly called together members of the international press and denounced the violence, the first of many denunciations of the Chilean reign of terror.

I began operating as a link between the different international organizations, all of which had mobilized (including Cepal—the Economic Commission for Latin America—whose executive secretary was then the current president of the Inter-American Development Bank, Enrique Iglesias) in order to protect students, employees, and foreigners in general. To our great sadness and indignation, the reaction of the Brazilian Embassy was atrocious: it turned its back on Brazilian citizens—men, women and children—then being hunted down simply because they were foreigners. Ambassador Câmara Canto, a confessed supporter of the coup, presided over one of the most deplorable episodes in the history of Brazilian diplomacy, the true story of which has yet to be told.

I FINISHED BY gaining access to another embassy for political exiles. This was the Italian Embassy, and one of the exiles was myself.

One day, near the end of September, I had left a meeting in the office of the Director of Flasco, stating that I was going to Cepal. I decided to stop by my own office, which was located in a neighboring building. Shortly afterward, I bumped into Enzo Falleto (co-author with Fernando Henrique of the now famous book *Dependency and Development in Latin America*), who stared at me astonished and asked, *Hombre, los milicos vinieran a buscarte: que haces acá?* (“The soldiers came to take you away: what are you doing here?”). Everyone thought that I was no longer in the building, including my colleagues and the soldiers who had believed them.

Though I was not aware of it, on that same day, they had invaded the apartment of the Brazilian poet Ferreira Gullar, who had presided over the famous Brazilian Popular Culture Center of the National Student Union, when I was president of that organization between 1963-1964. It was the apartment in which I had lived years earlier. The soldiers had looked for me there and found Gullar.

From that moment forward, I slept every night at the residence of the Italian ambassador. However, because there were not yet any other exiles at the embassy, there were no police at the door. Consequently, I was able to go out during the day in order to prepare the family for leaving the country. I even went to police headquarters to deal with passport questions.

The Ministry of Foreign Relations expressed its regret at having tried to arrest an international employee with diplomatic immunity and renewed the official visa in my passport. We left for the airport. However, the visa renewal was no more than a trap. On October 14, after my passport had been stamped “departure,” I was arrested at the airport with my infant son in my arms, in front of my wife and four-year-old daughter.

The police superintendent who made the arrest got my name wrong. In Brazil and Italy, I do not use my mother’s surname (Chirico). In Chile, inclusion of the maternal surname is obligatory. Thus, the arrest warrant had been issued in the name of José Serra Chirico. As if to convince himself that it was really me, he read—or practically shouted—a segment of the arrest warrant: *subversivo, izquierdista, intelectual e muy vivo* (“subversive, leftist, intellectual, and very clever”).

I was then handcuffed and spent three hours locked in the international arrival section of the airport, the target of furtive looks on the part of those arriving in the country. There I learned that the more you move your hands, the tighter the handcuffs become and the more they injure your wrists.

Finally, they took me to the civilian police headquarters where I spent the night on a wooden bench, while a group of detectives played pachisi and heatedly discussed soccer. I was able to gain some points with them by talking about Brazilian soccer and praising the famous Chilean goalkeeper Sergio Livingstone. They even offered me a jacket to ward off the cold.

Frightened and increasingly more tense as I recalled the pretexts that could be put forward to justify grave consequences at the hands of the Chilean repression, I became convinced that the worst was about to happen. From that

point forward—much to my surprise—I calmed down and recouped some of my energy in order to cope with the situation. Despite the hard bench, the shouting detectives, the cold, the bright light, and my chronic difficulties in sleeping, I fell into a deep slumber.

IN THE MORNING, after being submitted to an absolutely moronic interrogation—albeit with no violence whatsoever—I was transferred to the Stadium of Chile, the site where Garrincha and Vavá had won the World Cup for Brazil in 1962. It had been transformed into a prison camp and, as was to become known later, a center of torture and murder.

They left me in the main entrance hall, where I spent the day. Protesting that I had diplomatic immunity, I insisted on speaking with the commander, a certain Colonel Spinoza. Obviously, I was not aware that they were already murdering detainees and that the colonel was responsible for these assassinations.

In the early evening, an officer announced to me, *Por orden del major Ivan Lavanderos, usted puede salir, pero tiene que presentarse mañana temprano, a las siete y media, para ser interrogado por el mayor.* (“At the orders of Major Ivan Lavanderos, you can leave, but you must report early tomorrow at 7:30 to be interrogated by the major.”)

It made no sense. Release me at night to report back in the morning? I thought it more probable that I would take a bullet in the back and they would claim that I had tried to flee. However, I could not hesitate. I accepted and asked if I could visit a cell where Brazilians were being held. The first person I recognized was Silvério, a student of economics from São Paulo. I told him that I was being released and that, if anything happened to me, he should denounce it. Later on, in Europe, he told me that he hadn’t understood a word I had said—the result of one voice and two ears nearing the point of nervous breakdown.

Moving toward the main stadium gates, I was accompanied by a sergeant of the army. In the distance, I saw a pay phone and glanced at the soldier and decided to take the risk:

Usted tiene um jeton? ("Do you have a token?") *Si, como no* ("Yes, of course") he responded courteously. I called a friend and advised him I was being released. The walk from the stadium gates to the first street where I managed to get a taxi was certainly the longest and most tense walk of my life.

The next morning, I met with friends (including the current president of Chile, Ricardo Lagos, then a professor at Flacso) and it was decided that I would not report to the Stadium but would stay at the Italian Embassy, where Monica and the children had already taken refuge after my arrest. When it was announced that I was not going to report, the army placed soldiers at the door. In January, the family was granted safe conduct out of the country, while I had to stay until May, because the government refused to allow me to leave. There was a time when the ambassador sheltered more than six hundred people at the embassy.

I had been arrested on Sunday and released on Monday. On Wednesday, Major Lavanderos,

who had released me, was shot. The Swedish ambassador, Harald Edelstam (a veritable hero, for all he did during those dark days and nights of oppression and terror) told me that the major was tried for treason for having protected enemies of the state.

Years later, in Brazil, someone gave me a small, handwritten document, dated September 1973 that had been found at the headquarters of the São Paulo Political Police. With regard to me, the final paragraph stated simply,

Trata-se de "boa gente" que merece ser "tratado" pelos chilenos.

"Known as a 'good guy' who deserves to be 'treated' [that is, killed] by the Chileans." ●

Translated from the Portuguese by John Morris.

JOSÉ SERRA is an economist who has served as minister of budget and planning and minister of health in Brazil. He was a candidate for president in the 2002 election. This article is adapted from one that appeared in two Brazilian newspapers, *Folha de São Paulo* and *O Globo*, on September 11, 2003.)

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Standing in the Doorway

Dissent in the Twenty-first Century

Marshall Berman

ONE OF THE big changes *Dissent* went through, as we entered the new century, is that we moved into a new “home office” that was just an office, and left our office that was a home. Not just any old home, but the home of Simone Plastrik (d. 1999), who was not only our business manager but also, along with her husband, Stanley (d. 1981), one of our founders half a century ago. Simone was one of the few really magical people I have ever known. Her home projected her aura. Her apartment wasn’t big, yet we all felt bathed in light and space and fresh air; old and new books vied for space with plants, children’s drawings with vintage Abstract Expressionist art, memories of a life that began in interwar Paris with urgencies of New York and America here and now. Everything overflowed here, yet nobody felt crowded out. Militantly different men and women fought and thought here for years, protected in ways they never thought of. As she lay dying, we came to see what a remarkable achievement her home had been. She had created a great extended family; without asking us, she had adopted us all.

In one of our first issues of the century, *Dissent*, Winter 2000, we bade Simone goodbye. But it was too short, a restless farewell: we were so *busy*. (I am focusing on this issue, but I could have selected any number of others.) We printed not one but two symposia: a black-comic riff on the presence and/or absence of “critical culture” in America today and an agonized trip through the ambiguities of the abortion issue for Catholics, feminists and Democrats. Some of our contributors were usual suspects, others were specials: Jules Feiffer’s marvelous cartoon on “Jaytalking” inspired our

“critical culture” talk. It was striking how many people, in and out of our symposia, had a lot to say. Boris Kaputsin explored “Russia as a Post-Modern Society” and viewed both the growth and the crash of Soviet communism in the light of structural crises in modern life. Susan George, in a penetrating critique of the World Trade Organization, imagined many forms of globalism and argued that we didn’t have to settle for the worst. Harold Meyerson showed how John Sweeney’s AFL-CIO was helping to invent a larger, republican form of liberalism. Gabrielle Banks got down with Salvadoran teenagers talking sex, drugs, gangs, and capital. Ken Conca reflected on the environmental movement’s inner contradictions and current troubles. There were about ten more fascinating, unpredictable pieces on everything under the sun.

Our twenty-first-century authors sounded very different from the folks who had yelled at each other for years in Simone’s living room. In fact, most of the communication between us and them was online. They came from many occupations, ethnicities, and parts of the world. They wrote in fairly clear English (often clearer than ours), but shared no communal idiom or style. They were all on the left, but the amazing diversity of their voices showed how wide the democratic socialist horizon had become. One of the great ideas of the twentieth century was Ferdinand Toennies’s distinction between two forms of human association: *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*. The bonds of *Gemeinschaft* were narrow and exclusive, but emotionally, familially intense; those of *Gesellschaft* were less passionate and more reflective, less enveloping but potentially universal. You could say Simone’s death buried our *Gemeinschaft* forever; but in our first few issues without her, we were learning to live again as a *Gesellschaft*. It meant recognizing we would never again be so “at home”; but there

were other ways to be in a world that turned out to be a lot bigger and richer than we had thought.

SEPTEMBER 11, 2001, in less than an hour, threw us back into death and mourning. It forced us to see how little we really knew of the world we hoped to be in. At our first editorial board meeting after the attacks, Ground Zero was still smoking less than a mile away. A few people said, "Don't you see we're at war!" No one could say with any confidence that we weren't, but most of us wanted to know, "With what or who?" My own contribution was a wisecrack: "It's like a mix of Pearl Harbor with *Waiting for Godot*." We reached no consensus, except that there was an awful lot we needed to learn fast. But the way it went, the chances of anybody's learning anything were buried in rubble.

What came next was the great military buildup of 2002-2003, leading to the preemptive invasion of Iraq last spring. The horrible deaths that had happened in our home town just now were exploited as pretexts for a global war that was planned more than a decade ago. Overnight, it seemed, our war machine metastasized and our mass media militarized. One striking feature of this military buildup was that the military was against it. From Colin Powell on down, virtually all our generals and officers, who had spent real time under fire and seen real people die, were sure the occupation of Iraq would be a disaster—and indeed it has been. Militarism, one of the tectonic plates in our political culture, has made a huge shift in a short time. The United States has turned into the type of nation described in Alfred Vagts's classic *History of Militarism*, where power lies with "the militarism of the civilians," and where civilian zealots and megalomaniacs drag conservative generals into wars. Now *there's* something we've learned!

Nobody knows what the long-term results of 9/11 will be. So far, though, it has raised the scale of violence and chaos erupting from what was already the most violent and chaotic part of the world. And it has lowered the level of discourse and action close to home. Two years later, our White House orchestrates aggressive brutality, not only toward despotisms



in the Middle East but toward democracies in “the old Europe,” toward the United Nations, and toward large parts of our own population. For months, our mass media acted like groupies cheering the president on, while our political leaders devolved into living dead. Lately, though, as troubles have escalated and approval ratings dropped, a few have begun to stir. Can these bones live?

I HAVE TALKED more than I meant to about death. Thinking about the death I started with, Simone’s, carried me back to a great American song, “On the Banks of the Wabash,” a sheet-music best-seller a century ago. It starts with one of the most heart-rending lines in history: *I can see my mother standing in the doorway*. I wept, as I always do when I sing this song. Then I remembered that the first line had a story of its own. The song was composed by Paul Dresser, one of the great American songwriters in the generation before Gershwin and Berlin. But the first line, only that line, was written by Dresser’s younger brother, the young Theodore Dreiser. The line may have released something inside him. Just after this he began, by some inner magic no one has ever explained, to turn himself into the great radical urban realist writer we know and love. Maybe our own trajectory will move this way. *Dissent* in the twenty-first century will probably have many offices; none will ever be

“home” to us, as Simone’s home once was. But if that home nourished us as we believe it did, our vision of Simone in the doorway can help us remember where we came from, and our memory can bring us new powers: power to see through doors that hold modern men and women back, power to help break big doors down.

In 1989, at the end of the cold war, in the twentieth century’s home stretch—it seems so long ago now—the poet Seamus Heaney had just the words for that lovely time: he said, “Hope and history rhyme.” Many intellectuals then imagined we would be free to live John Lennon’s song, “Imagine”: imagine how to share America’s wealth with the world, imagine how to create a happier and better life. Instead, we have been forced to worry about the rubble: how to keep morality and culture from crumbling the way bombed buildings crumble; what we can construct out of the wreck that won’t make us feel worse. The best thing I can think of to say about today’s history is that it rhymes with “mystery”: we don’t much understand where it came from, we know even less where it will go. But we still have the power to hope and to imagine. And the twenty-first century is still young. ●

MARSHALL BERMAN, Distinguished Professor at CCNY/CUNY, is working on *One Hundred Years of Spectacle*, a book about Times Square.

A Word to Our Readers

THE PURPOSE of this new magazine is suggested by its name: to dissent from the bleak atmosphere of conformism that pervades the political and intellectual life of the United States; to dissent from the support of the status quo now so noticeable on the part of many former radicals and socialists; to dissent from the terrible assumption that a new war is necessary or inevitable, and that the only way to defeat Stalinism is through atomic world suicide.

The accent of *Dissent* will be radical. Its tradition will be the tradition of democratic socialism. We shall try to reassert the libertarian values of the socialist ideal, and at the same time, to discuss freely and honestly what in the socialist tradition remains alive, and what needs to be discarded or modified.

Dissent is not and does not propose to become a political party or group. On the contrary, its existence is based on an awareness that in America today there is no significant socialist movement and that, in all likelihood, no such movement will appear in the immediate future. The editors and supporters of *Dissent* are independent radicals bound together by common values and ideas, who are eager to assert those values and ideas, as well as to discuss freely their differences and problems.

Dissent will attempt to:

- provide fresh and lively critical opinion on the issues of the day.
- bring together intellectual sentiment against the blight of conformism.
- defend democratic, humanist and radical values.
- attack all forms of totalitarianism, whether fascist or Stalinist.
- engage in a frank and friendly dialogue with liberal opinion.
- publish studies of American cultural life.
- encourage scholarly contributions in political and social thought.
- discuss and reevaluate socialist doctrines.

Dissent will not have any editorial position or statement. Each writer will speak for himself. Our magazine will be open to a wide area of opinion, excluding only Stalinists and totalitarian fellow-travellers on the one hand and those former radicals who have signed their peace with society as it is, on the other. We shall welcome any expression of lively and competent thought, or scholarly contributions touching upon our area of interest, even if these dissent from *Dissent*.

But *Dissent* would be meaningless if in dissenting it did not also affirm. We are united in the affirmation of a positive belief—the belief in socialism. Not the “socialism” of any splinter or faction or party, but rather the ethos and the faith in humanity that for more than 100 years have made men “socialists.” We share a belief in the dignity of the individual, we share a refusal to countenance one man’s gain at the expense of his brother, and we share an intellectual conviction that man can substantially control his condition if he understands it and wills to.

Dissent is being published by a group of independent radicals who have raised the funds necessary to insure the honoring of the subscriptions we solicit. . .

If you would like to see such a magazine thrive in America, you can join the friends of *Dissent* in obtaining subscriptions from your friends, in contributing the funds—and the articles—required for its sustenance, and in spreading the word that there is a free voice of *Dissent*.

THE EDITORS, WINTER 1954

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Imperialism and the United States

Responses to Michael Walzer

Horst Brand

DURING THE beginning years of the twentieth century, the administration of the German colony of Southwest Africa (now Namibia) decided to construct a concessionary railroad linking a mining area in the east of the colony with the coast, running straight through the pasture lands of the Hereros, a native people. The Hereros bitterly resisted, and large numbers of them, including women and children, were killed by German troops. In late 1906, the German government requested additional credits for its warfare in Southwest Africa from the Reichstag, which the Social Democrats refused to approve; thereupon Emperor William II dissolved the Reichstag, leading to new elections in which the Social Democrats lost nearly one-half of their representatives. This loss, caused chiefly by the nationalist fervor of the electorate, aroused sharp inner-party disputes as to the “realism” of the party’s colonial policy. The major intellectual contest was between Karl Kautsky and Eduard Bernstein. Kautsky opposed colonialism and uncompromisingly demanded the self-determination of people. A socialist colonial policy, he argued, was a contradiction in terms: all colonial policy represented alien rule and thus was a denial of socialism’s basic idea regarding the right to freedom and independence. A socialist colonial regime might be benign but would nonetheless be based on force and oppression.

The Social Democrat congress of 1907 resisted adoption of Kautsky’s unambiguous position. Its own ambiguity was rooted in the thought of Bernstein and others that socialism must strive to place “the forces of production” at the service of all humankind, and so the party should view colonialism as an integral

part of the universal goal of cultural advance borne by the socialist movement. The congress accepted the position advocated by Bernstein (as well as by Jean Jaurès, the French socialist leader), that it behooved the representatives of social democracy to fight the exploitation of native people and to demand reforms that would improve their condition. The belief that, under humane regimes, colonialism would promote the forces of production had the effect of sustaining the rule of imperial countries and the belief in their cultural mission. (Kautsky’s position was not adopted unreservedly until the party’s congress in 1928.)

Imperialism was first elucidated theoretically as part of evolving world capitalism by the European left (for example, Rudolf Hilferding) early in the twentieth century. That capitalism played a dynamic role in advancing the “forces of production,” and that its achievements were to be the heritage of a socialist society, was not questioned by any of the leading thinkers of the left. Not one of them, however, confused democracy with capitalism and “the market.” In his bitter struggles with Lenin and Bolshevism, Kautsky wrote, “Democracy is now even more important than the economic elevation of the proletariat.” It constituted “the foundation” that would safeguard the process of lasting growth of the masses. Although the remark at the time applied chiefly to the Soviet Union, it was inconceivable to thinkers like Kautsky that capitalism at home or its imperialist form abroad could be a basis for democratic development.

The distinction Michael Walzer makes between imperialism and hegemony (“Is There an American Empire?” Fall 2003) is at best artificial—it has no virtue of clarification. M. Rostovtzeff, the great historian of the ancient world, has written (if in a context different from the modern age), “Imperialism has not always involved the intention of acquiring an increase

in territory. The desire for political hegemony . . . cannot but be regarded as a form of imperialism." Call it imperialism, call it hegemony, both are forms of domination.

Was the war against Iraq "imperialist?" It is patent that the war and the attempt eventually to install an Iraqi government sympathetic to American policy are means to ensure American hegemony in the Middle East, including of course the control of its petroleum resources. The removal of Saddam Hussein, unquestionably a plus, remains but a sideshow in the drama of hegemonic ambition, the successful outcome of which, in a historical era characterized by fervent nationalism and anti-colonialism, seems to me to be profoundly dubious.

There have been means less expensive than those applied in Iraq, but which today may be less practicable. Examples are the coup against Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh of Iran in 1953; the overthrow of the Guatemalan leader Jacobo Arbenz or of Salvador Allende in Chile. No expensive military forces were required, only a willing strata of native-born collaborators and praetorian guards trained in the United States.

It is true that the hegemonic reach of the United States, as of any great power, has limits and can to an extent be constrained. But the *thrust* of the hegemonic drive, fueled as it is by the expansionary dynamics of corporate capitalism and its links with the state, must not be underestimated, and must be part of the political analysis that Walzer calls for. The institutions that channel those forces—the North American Free Trade Agreement, the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank—may be amenable to negotiating with this or that non-governmental organization. But such negotiations are unlikely to modify their fundamental purpose, which is to continue to commercialize the world economy, enlarge profits, insist on the unrestricted right to invest, and safeguard property rights broadly defined. Resistance to these forces may not always deserve the cachet of democratic struggle, but the drive for self-determination remains the precondition for that struggle. ●

HORST BRAND has frequently contributed to *Dissent*.

James B. Rule

NO, THE OVERWEENING geopolitical role assumed by this administration isn't exactly like the British Empire—or the Roman, the Ottoman or the Inca empires, for that matter. No, the hard-right regime in Washington does not always succeed in browbeating American allies and extracting active support for its high-handed overseas policies. And yes, the rest of the world is showing all sorts of healthy and innovative counter-currents. *But*—a great, big *but*—the unilateralist directions now dominating America's foreign policy are dangerous, menacing, and corrosive to values that the left should be first to defend. The worst of it is that these baleful trends threaten to scuttle what could be a historic opportunity for the world—the chance to make a quantum jump beyond the destructive limitations of the system of interstate rivalry that has prevailed for centuries.

Dissent authors such as Mitchell Cohen,

Paul Berman, Suzanne Nossel, and Michael Walzer have had a good deal to say about America's world role in recent editions. There are some good ideas in all these contributions, though it will be apparent that I appreciate some of them more than others. But none of these authors seems to see in the current geopolitical situation the drama that I do—or to recognize how diametrically opposed the current directions emanating from Washington are for the values that ought to animate the left.

Consider the position that the Bush regime has staked. The United States now arrogates to itself the option of making or breaking regimes around the world, without regard for the effect of its actions on existing alliances, treaties, or supra-national institutions. This country will invade and destroy any regime bracketed as an actual or potential threat to America. Lacking evidence of such a threat, Washington can manufacture it to order, and no friendly

skepticism or critical scrutiny at home or abroad will matter. And the way for a country to get itself defined as a threat is to defy Washington on a matter that it declares vital. In short, regimes may be politically retrograde, brutally repressive, and armed with those infamous Weapons of Mass Destruction, and still enjoy American support—if only they don't dare to declare themselves “against us,” rather than “with us.” But thumbing one's nose at Washington on matters Washington declares vital is an invitation to membership in the Axis of Evil, with implications for regime life expectancy that now need no further explanation.

Does this sound like an imperial stance to you? Me, too. But what matters is not so much the words we choose as what we see at stake. At stake here is the underlying effect of Washington's unilateralism in undercutting prospects for a world less dominated by the zero-sum state system that has ordered world affairs for centuries. Such a shift to a less competitive, less destructive international order is no longer merely a utopian possibility, as I argued in these pages in Fall 2002 (“Dissenting from the American Empire”). In her Summer 2003 *Dissent* article, Suzanne Nossel details many developments that, as I see them, represent straws in the wind in this direction. These include the rise in number and importance of nongovernmental organizations as actors on the world stage, the rising significance of supranational and transnational structures, and the growing importance of democratic public opinion in setting directions for national policy. What people like us should be heralding is that these developments add up to a historic opportunity for the left—and that high-handed exercises in unilateralism, such as the disastrous, aggressive war against Iraq, countervail diametrically against this possibility. Indeed, history may well portray the unilateralist extremes of this regime as a desperate effort to head off a gathering global trend in the opposite direction.

So yes, as Nossel and Walzer remind us, diversity in the community of nations is alive. Even countries that once would have been knee-jerk clients of Washington dug in their heels over the Iraq operations—partly out of a new responsiveness to domestic opinion within

these countries. Good!

But the fact is, none of this stopped the United States from invading Iraq. All sorts of countervailing influences were simply brushed aside. Having defanged any potential protest from our elected representatives and forestalled critical comment from the U.S. media, the regime in Washington strong-armed some allies into complicity, sneered at those who resisted, and did everything possible to undercut the efforts and the standing of the United Nations. Against the better judgment both of the region and of the world community, the United States in a matter of weeks dismantled a regime halfway around the world.

The aim of this exercise of naked power—more than any concern about oil, certainly more than the phony threat of weapons of mass destruction, more than the fate of democracy in Iraq—was to send a message. To wit: don't cross America on matters it declares to be its vital interest. Any country tempted to do so now has to fear a fate like Iraq's. The absence of credible proof that Iraq posed an immediate threat to the United States; the availability of alternate avenues for mediating the conflict between the two countries; the opposition of the United Nations and of most neighboring countries; and the destructive effects of unilateral action on American alliances—none of these considerations ultimately mattered.

It is a scandal that this outrageously trumped up exercise in aggressive unilateralism received support in the pages of this magazine.

WE IN *DISSENT* should be working for a foreign policy precisely the opposite of that underlying the Iraq invasion. We should be supporting collective, multilateral processes for resolving big-power conflicts and other troubles in the geopolitical order—even when they run counter to declared American interest; indeed, even when we have misgivings about specific outcomes. We should be supporting such processes because, on balance, they strengthen the kind of geopolitical order that best suits humane, egalitarian, and democratic values.

But there is resistance to this thesis, even among those who think of themselves as belonging on the left. Some persist in placing

their faith in American policy as a force for democracy around the world. For them, a democratic Iraq (the supposed result of America's invasion) will surely be worth the price in terms of battered alliances, a weakened United Nations, and other casualties of unilateralism. Only America can take the lead in disseminating democracy around the world, these thinkers aver; so let us support American power, and implore that it be used wisely, at least most of the time.

It is striking how resiliently such ideas persist in the face of inconsistent evidence. Like the enduring belief in the Loch Ness monster, they stand as an embarrassing monument to the human will to believe.

True, America has been willing to give crucial support for democratic institutions, as in Germany and Japan after the Second World War. Democratic regimes may well be preferable to the alternatives, for American policymakers, if only they support larger power aspirations of this country, such as the containment of communism. Where democracy would pose problems for America's struggle for geopolitical supremacy, it is readily sacrificed—in Chile in the 1970s, for example, or South Africa in the apartheid era. Much the same holds true today. No one really imagines that the United States would now welcome a prompt transition to popular democracy in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, or Algeria, any more than it would have done a few decades ago in many South American countries. A *New York Times* op-ed piece by Kenneth Pollack, a top foreign-policy planner in the Clinton administration, gives the point away. Writing in October 2003, on democratizing tendencies in Saudi Arabia, he temporizes,

... if we could magically create democracy in Saudi Arabia tomorrow, we would probably find Islamic fundamentalists elected by overwhelming margins. It will take years of political liberalization before enough moderate political leaders emerge to offer an alternative to the Islamists and the regime.

In other words, if the cost of democracy is an unfriendly government, that cost is too great for the United States.

AND SO WITH IRAQ. It strains credulity to suggest that creation of democracy in that country represents a key ultimate aim of the American invasion. For public consumption, Bush administration spokespeople would have us believe that such a creation process is about as straightforward and predictable as baking a cake. These convictions, if sincere, are stunningly naïve, especially regarding a fractious country with no traditions of pluralism or tolerance for ethnic and regional differences. It should not be difficult for the occupiers to leave Iraq with a less brutal government than the one blown away by American military might last spring—for that much, we can be glad. But the notion that Americans can promptly create a stand-alone regime that is both democratic and pluralistic *and* pro-American requires a leap of faith suitable only for crackpot optimists.

One can well imagine a scenario in which Iraq remains for the indefinite future a costly, murderous, overseas colony of the United States. Or one can imagine the United States withdrawing from Iraq within a year, thus setting the stage for one or another form of authoritarian Islamic government, more or less intensely unfriendly to its American benefactors. But neither of these eventualities sounds like a winning suit with the American public—and quite properly not. This contradiction strikes me as loaded with political dynamite for the Bush administration. At least, I hope so.

Again, I don't deny that the United States has made significant contributions to pluralism and democracy at specific historical junctures—or even that this country might repeat the performance, given the right cues. American foreign policy has many modes, from George W. Bush to Jimmy Carter to Woodrow Wilson. We need to recognize the differences, and be clear about just how far to one extreme this administration is leading us.

But it is a disaster for the left simply to constitute itself as a sort of *Consumer Reports* panel for the applications of American geopolitical might, giving thumbs-up or thumbs-down to specific episodes. Cheering for the “good America” won't help much, if the structures that give scope to the other America remain untouched. Instead, people like us should be

seeking a 180-degree turn in American geopolitical strategy, starting with significant downsizing of America's aggressive military capabilities, and supporting the very attenuation of national sovereignties that this administration is trying to combat.

We should be putting forward a distinctive vision of America as a supportive participant in an array of multilateral global problem-solving structures. This is a vision of a less militarized, and less militaristic America—a national self-image of a country that does not need to be a global hegemon in order to be secure. A corollary of this vision is increased multilateral responsibility for world order, so that the United States no longer need play the role of world specialist in military enforcement.

In this vision, national resources and national attention should be redirected from the quest for eternal supremacy abroad to tasks required to make America truly strong at home. These include affordable universal health care; serious efforts at sustainable environmental and energy policies; quality education for all young people, always aimed at equal opportunity—and on and on. Need I point out that these traditional aims of the democratic left would be far closer to attainment in this country, were not such a large portion of our national treasure devoted to maintaining military supremacy?

Pursuing such a vision would obviously call for vast change—in distribution of political power in this country, obviously, but also in the mind-set of ordinary Americans. Thus I confess to skepticism concerning Walzer's anodyne words on the subject. "Americans don't have the capacity, or . . . the stomach for imperialism," he writes (*Dissent*, Fall 2003); "our pub-

lic commitment to democracy makes imperial rule very hard to justify . . ." This has the ring of pathologically wishful thinking.

In fact, imperial fantasies run deep in this country's political culture. Last April, presidential candidate Howard Dean made what should have passed as a matter-of-fact observation: the United States, he noted, "won't always have the strongest military." Immediately the opposition pounced on him for wandering off the imperial reservation. "No serious candidate for the presidency," thundered Senator John Kerry's spokesperson, "has ever before suggested that he would compromise or tolerate an erosion of America's military supremacy." Dean's statement, the Kerry campaign charged, raised "serious questions about [Dean's] capacity to serve as commander in chief." Think of it—these words were spoken on behalf of one of the Democratic Party lapdogs who abdicated in advance any possibility of a critical stance regarding Bush's invasion of Iraq!

As with his other lapses into straight-speaking, candidate Dean recanted, and his campaign got back onto the well-worn rails of foreign-policy orthodoxy. It is imperative that we on the left not follow. In one way, the situation in America today makes our task easy. We can identify our vision simply as the diametrical opposite to the neo-conservative fantasies animating this country's foreign policy today. They want a world where America always ultimately dominates in the application of geopolitical power—forever, presumably. We ought to be helping people envision a world where national dominance is less and less necessary for national well-being. ●

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George Scialabba

“IT’S NOT AT ALL CLEAR,” Michael Walzer writes in “Is There an American Empire?” (Fall 2003), “that market dominance and the extraction of profits require political domination.” If anyone (say, Milton Friedman or the late Robert Nozick) had made this observation to Walzer as part of a general defense of contemporary American capitalism, I suspect that *Dissent*’s co-editor would have replied sharply, “Not at present, perhaps.” He would then have forcefully reminded his interlocutor of the enormous and indispensable role of violence, intimidation, bribery, and other forms of state or state-sanctioned coercion in the expropriation of the national territory, the creation of a national market, the disenfranchisement of the former slave population, the partial defeat of worker self-organization, and the complete defeat of populist and socialist challenges to control of the state by business and financial elites. This pervasive, unremitting coercion, Walzer would have pointed out, largely succeeded in demoralizing, delegitimizing, and depriving of financial and other resources most proponents of economic democracy or other un-American schemes in previous generations. As a result, the mass media, the public school system, and the major political parties are now profoundly inhospitable to oppositional ideas and programs, which naturally means that only a small minority ever espouse them, or even get to hear of them. Overt coercion or illegality is no longer necessary—though if a serious threat materialized to such fundamental elite prerogatives as capital strike, capital flight, or investor control of electoral politics, there is little reason to believe that the ruling class would deal with it any more fairly and pacifically than in the past. “If that’s what you mean by the absence of political domination,” Walzer would have thundered in conclusion, “I’ll grant your point.” Exit Friedman or Nozick, tail between his legs.

The central argument of “Is There an American Empire?” would seem to merit a similar, though perhaps more nuanced and less thunderous, rejoinder. “The market operates to allow richer states to acquire and use the re-

sources of poorer states,” Walzer writes, “not independently of politics but without reliance on political domination.” This is misleading. Just as with national politics, the current—apparently settled and legitimate—structure of international economic relations rests on a long and successful history of suppressing opposition through state or state-sanctioned violence or the threat of it.

THIS IS OBVIOUS in the case of Central America—though why does Walzer qualify his acknowledgment of that fact with “in an earlier age”? Sending in the Marines is not, after all, the only way to exercise political domination. Fear of the Marines—of U.S. military intervention if reform passes narrow bounds—works equally well, as does fear of an illegal blockade that will cruelly reduce a small, poor country’s standard of living still further. An imperial/hegemonic state, like a competent Mafia don, rules by fear and will rarely resort to actual violence. Training and equipping a native officer class that will, under American tutelage, regard movements for political reform as threats to national security and will therefore murder editors, reporters, lawyers, teachers, human rights activists, and union members, sometimes on quite a large scale, is another very effective form of political domination. Diplomatic support or direct bribes for governments that maintain a favorable investment climate—inducements never extended to governments merely because they are zealous in fostering literacy or public health or trade unions or civil rights—is still another. Creating a guerrilla organization to harass a government that evicts an American client regime, demonstrates at least verbal antipathy to economic “liberalization,” and actually shows some promise of improving the population’s quality of life—this, too, concentrates the neighbors’ minds wonderfully. The result of this very effective menu of interventions—by no means limited to “an earlier age”—has been to pulverize past opposition to American “market dominance” and severely disadvantage present and future opposition, rendering further Ameri-

can intervention unnecessary, at least for the time being. If this is what Walzer means by the absence of political domination, one may grant his point.

CENTRAL AMERICA is, we can all agree, a special case. Because U.S. influence there has been virtually unopposed from outside the region, it offers a particularly clear illustration of what the U.S. government will do when it can get away with just about anything. What it will do, evidently, is whatever it considers necessary to “acquire and use the resources of poorer states.”

Elsewhere, as Walzer notes, the U.S. government cannot get away with just anything. The costs of intervention in countries larger, richer, more powerful, and more distant than those of Central America will often outweigh the benefits. In such cases, our government will simply do the best it can for its principals. It will continue to train and equip foreign military and security forces—as it has in Chile, Brazil, Iran, Indonesia, Greece, Egypt, Turkey, Israel, Thailand, South Korea, the Philippines, and the former Soviet Central Asia, for example—preparing them to move against civilian politicians or groups who pose even a potential threat to the vital interests of American companies and/or financial institutions, or to join other American allies and clients in policing regions with vital resources. It will block access to American markets and international lending for governments that balk at allowing foreign control of their banking systems, public utilities, and key industries, or at welcoming dubious but profitable new technologies that may impoverish their agro-ecology and set a large fraction of their agricultural population adrift, or at signing on to intellectual-property or other “investor rights” agreements that will institutionalize the advantages of the richer countries. It will militarize space and spend a large fraction of national resources on capabilities (including an unprecedentedly far-flung

and secret network of military bases*) that have no conceivable relation to the defense of territorial integrity and independence—the original definition of “national security”—but serve only to intimidate the uncooperative.

Does all this add up to an empire? Not to the Roman Empire. Not even to the British Empire. But if, as Walzer writes, “an imperial government gets what it wants from the governments it creates, or supports, or patronizes,” what should we call a government that usually gets what it wants from governments it supports, or patronizes, or intimidates, or simply has most vital interests in common with—provided, that is, a nation’s “vital interests” are correctly understood; that is, not as the welfare of its population but rather as the goals of those elites that control the state?*

Actually, I don’t much care what we call it (though Walzer is right to scold some leftists for calling it anything they please, without regard for what their preferred term has meant in the past or might mean now to whomever they’re talking to). But I would very much like to know which of the above two definitions of “national interest” Michael Walzer thinks is more accurate, applied to American foreign policy today—or at any other time. ●

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*For much more about this, see Chalmers Johnson’s recent *The Shadows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy, and the End of the Republic*.

**As Suzanne Nossel (“Democracy Confronts the Superpower,” Summer 2003) points out, though in different language, American global preeminence is declining, and other nations can be expected to assert themselves proportionately. The National Security Strategy document of September 2002 was a response to this development, serving notice that the United States will use military force not only, as in the past, to prevent other nations from withdrawing from the world market, but also to prevent any others from replacing the United States as its overseer and chief beneficiary.

Michael Walzer Replies

HORST BRAND's historical account of the debate about colonialism among German social democrats in the early twentieth century nicely makes my point: the debate we need to have today is significantly different. Brand makes the same point himself when he tells us that the success of American hegemonic ambitions in Iraq (which for him are the same as imperial ambitions) is very doubtful. Jim Rule takes a stronger line: only crackpots can imagine an American success in Iraq. They both recognize that the world has changed; forms of political rule that once were possible are no longer possible. But Brand wants to confront this new world with an old theory. This is an example, it seems to me, of loyalty or faith, whereas what we need is skeptical, worried, innovative political analysis.

Faith in the theory of imperialism probably also accounts for Brand's implicit claim (George Scialabba's, too) that Tip O'Neal's maxim, "All politics is local" is not only wrong but absolutely wrong: when imperial power is loose in the world, no politics is local. The Iranian and Chilean coups were the work, Brand tells us, of American collaborators and praetorian guards. Notice the images: praetorian guards refer to the Roman Empire, which was indeed a real empire, and the word "collaborator" recalls those Europeans who cooperated with their Nazi conquerors, who were indeed real conquerors. In Iran and Chile, by contrast, American influence was certainly important, but it worked from a distance, and social forces on the ground, the local class structure and political culture, were also important. If we are to get the interaction among these different factors right, we need to *think*, not just repeat ancient formulas.

George Scialabba knows that Robert Nozick and I argued for many years about the relative value of capitalism and socialism. And Nozick indeed claimed that market relations and profit-making did not require political domination. He also argued that the actually existing political domination of "new deal" and social democratic regulators stood in the way of the full development of capitalism, and he

asked whether a revolution to establish capitalism in America would be justified. It may be that we are now witnessing that revolution. But Scialabba must be mystified by the radicalism and ideological fierceness of Bush and Co. because he believes that capitalism was totally established a long time ago, through "violence, intimidation, bribery, and other forms of state and state-sanctioned coercion." The potted history he puts in my mouth is half true. What is left out is the long story of (partially successful) struggles to control capitalism and establish a welfare state—the existence of which Nozick recognized and condemned.

When Scialabba turns to international society, he seems to believe that were it not for the Marines and the fear of the Marines, were it not for our praetorian guards and satellite governments, and the massive repression of radical movements ordered by the United States—were it not for all this, democrats and socialists would run the world. It is as if all the right-wing parties across the globe, all the ruling classes, and all the reactionary ideological movements, are organized from Washington. The theory of imperialism has triumphed over the reality principle.

Yes, there has been a long history of repression aimed at labor movements and radical parties and national liberation movements that set themselves against imperial rule or the power of multinational corporations. But the repression hasn't always worked. And if the international left is to win its current battles, it has to understand what kinds of politics have succeeded and what kinds have failed in the past. More modestly, if our goal is to foster liberal internationalism in a hegemonic America, we need to recognize the limits that now exist on the uses of American power and argue for the advantages of living within those limits rather than trying, as Bush and Co. are now trying, to sweep them away. That argument is probably compatible with either of the views of national interest that Scialabba proposes: the welfare of the people or "the goals of the elites that control the state" (notice that a large part

of our ruling elites opposed the Iraq war). But I will let the elites argue on their own behalf. At *Dissent* we will defend the general welfare as best we can. But we will continue to worry about how that welfare is best understood and how it is most effectively defended. These are not questions usefully addressed, much less settled by, the theory of imperialism.

WITH JIM RULE I have large agreements and large disagreements, of which the latter are probably more interesting. I do not believe it is a scandal that *Dissent* has published articles defending an American war to overthrow Saddam Hussein. Given the awfulness of that regime (which Rule can barely bring himself to acknowledge), that is a position well within the range of arguments that we ought to be sponsoring. Were we to enforce a party line on issues like this and refuse to carry dissenting views in *Dissent*—that would be a scandal.

I share Rule's anger at the unilateralism of the Bush administration, and I am ready to join him in supporting a strongly internationalist foreign policy. But I am not certain about Rule's commitment to internationalism, which, in my understanding of it, sometimes requires the use of force on behalf of oppressed people in distant countries. No doubt, force in such cases should be multilateral if it can be, but if there are no other "sides" ready to act, then anyone who can stop the oppression or the murder or the ethnic cleansing, should do so. That "anyone" can be the Vietnamese in Cambodia, the Indians in Bangladesh, the Tanzanians in Uganda, the Nigerians in Sierra Leone—and the United States and NATO in Kosovo. Nobody, it's worth noting, was prepared to be the "anyone" in Rwanda in 1994, and I am afraid that there are and will be many similar cases—which should be taken, I believe, as failures of internationalism. But does Rule recognize the failures?

His vision of "multilateral responsibility for world order" is one we can all endorse. But a 180-degree turn in American foreign policy is

far from all that is necessary for its realization. Right now, it is hard to believe that "multilateral responsibility" would actually produce a better order (or any order at all). A lot of other countries—our European allies prominent among them—would have to be prepared to worry about the way the world goes, and to act forcefully to make sure it goes well, before a multilateral order is possible. Pretending that we are almost there, except for American arrogance and aggressiveness, is indeed an exercise in crackpot optimism.

A word, finally, about democracy. Rule quotes Kenneth Pollack warning us against democratic elections in Saudi Arabia, since these would probably bring Islamic fundamentalists to power. Rule takes this as an example of American hypocrisy: "In other words," he writes, "if the cost of democracy is an unfriendly government, that cost is too high." But what if the cost is not only an unfriendly government but also a government more repressive and more brutal than the existing one? That is the issue Rule persistently avoids. It arises also with multilateralism: what if Rule's visionary order produces world disorder—increased nuclear proliferation, more cases of massacre and ethnic cleansing? The issue is hard, and it may require a politics of subtlety, compromise, and indirection. The Bush administration seems incapable of such a politics, but I doubt that Rule would support it in any case. His view of democracy and multilateralism seems remarkably uncomplicated. In the world as he describes it, America is responsible for the awful things that happen; occasionally, he concedes, for the good things that happen; and no one else is responsible for anything that happens. If we would only step back and allow decisions to be made by others, everything would be fine. My own view is different: if American leftists want to defend an internationalist politics, we had better begin by acknowledging the obstacles—here at home, of course, but not only here. ●

MICHAEL WALZER is co-editor of *Dissent*.



Jonah After the Year 2000

Joanne Barkan

ALAIN TANNER'S 1976 film *Jonah Who Will Be 25 in the Year 2000* qualified as an instant classic among my cohorts—American leftists of the sixties generation. Ask a few if they saw the film years ago, and you'll probably get reactions like the ones I recently got:

"Sure, I loved it!" (Marshall Berman)

"I sure have seen it. Three times." (Jim Sleeper)

"Not only did I see it, maybe three times, but I adored it so much I wrote about it at length for *Film Quarterly* . . ." (Todd Gitlin)

Jonah is a low-budget, French-language film, set in Geneva with a screenplay by Tanner, a Swiss director influenced by British and French avant-garde cinema, and British essayist-novelist John Berger. These are not exactly ingredients for a box-office bonanza in the United States, but *Jonah* got some play, garnered rave reviews from the *New Yorker's* Pauline Kael and other high-powered critics, and won the National Society of Film Critics award for best screenplay of 1976.

To someone hearing about the film for the first time, *Jonah's* subject might sound done-to-death: the sixties generation a decade later, trying to live decently and hold onto ideals. A dozen other U.S. and European films have done it. The best-known American versions—John Sayles's *Return of the Secaucus Seven* (1980) and Lawrence Kasdan's *The Big Chill* (1983)—use the most common format: a group of friends from college meets a decade or so later for a weekend reunion. The setting is the house of one of them, and the activity is soul-searching about career, love, sex, politics, and lapsed values. There's a little bed-hopping, a lot of tears, and, finally, fond farewells. (Sayles

once wryly pinpointed the main difference between his film and *The Big Chill*: Kasdan's characters are more upwardly mobile.)

Jonah was—and still is—something else, an altogether different cinematic genre. It opens conventionally enough: Max, a main character, buys a pack of Gauloises in a tobacconist's shop and comments on rising prices. Cut to a tracking shot of an imposing statue of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Geneva's most famous citizen and *Jonah's* intellectual escort. As the camera moves past the statue, we hear an off-camera voice quoting Rousseau:

All our wisdom consists of servile prejudices; all our customs are nothing but enslavement, constraint, and coercion. Civilized man is born, lives, and dies in slavery; at birth he is sewn into swaddling clothes; at his death he is nailed into a coffin. As long as he retains human form, he is enchained by our institutions . . .

Some 110 minutes later comes the second-to-last scene of the film—another shot of Rousseau's statue with another voice-over quotation:

. . . needs change according to men's situations. There is truly a difference between the man of nature living in a state of nature and the man of nature living in society. Emile is not a primitive to be consigned to the wilderness. He is a primitive made for living in the city.

The two quotations set up the psycho-political guideposts of *Jonah*: on the one hand, an implacable condemnation of human society as it is; on the other, a decision to act as if the game's not up, as if the future could be better, as if a new generation might do better (hence the reference to Rousseau's *Emile or On Education*). Between the two shots of the statue, we watch a succession of self-contained episodes in the lives of eight characters, all of them looking for ways to avoid constraints and coercion; all of them completely engaging. Tan-

ner described them in the preface to the published screenplay (English translation, North Atlantic Books, 1983):

We have nicknamed our characters the “little prophets,” first because their prophecies are little, and second because they themselves are not conscious of being prophets in the traditional sense of the term. They never announce their prophecies, which only exist for them at the individual and existential level. . . . The danger of the great prophecies is megalomania and the absence of scruples . . .

The political musings in *Jonah* are as diverse as the thoughts of the characters. No one has an integrated theory, an ideology, or certitude; yet no one but Max even feigns cynicism, and not even Max withdraws completely. Political observations crop up unsystematically—during an explanation of Tantric sex or an argument about an alternative school or a decision to take a job; while making an onion tart, posing for a mural painting, or naming a baby; in a snippet of newsreel footage or a voice-over quotation. They include ingenious riffs on time, dialectics, prophesy, revolution, and history. Take, for example, the extraordinary sausage scene which, I’d wager, no one who’s seen *Jonah* ever forgets:

Marco is the chubby, tousled-haired history teacher with the impish smile. He walks into his first class at Geneva High School, heaves a suitcase onto his desk, and pulls out a metronome and an eight-foot-long blood sausage. Peering through heavy black-framed glasses and brandishing a meat cleaver, he tells the students, “Never forget that my father is a butcher and that my mother sings light opera very well.” He asks a student to chop the sausage into segments to the rhythm of the metronome. He starts his lecture:

So these are the pieces of history. What should we call them? Hours? Decades? Centuries? It’s all the same, and it never stops. The sausage is eaten with mashed potatoes. Is time a sausage? Darwin thought so, even though the stuffing changed from one end of the sausage to the other. Marx thought that some day everyone would stop eating sausage. Einstein and Max Planck tore the skin off the sausage which, from then on, lost its shape . . .

In another scene, Madeleine cleverly sums up for Max the difference between her Tantric practice and his pessimistic utilitarianism, a product, she claims, of his Protestant background: “You transform your religion into morality—and me, I destroy morality through religion.” Another scene explains the title of the film. Seven of the main characters are having dinner together when Mathilde announces that she and Mathieu are going to have another child. Everyone suggests a name. Mathieu likes Emile “because of Jean-Jacques.” Marcel proposes Jonah: “He fell from the ship, from the beautiful ship of fools we navigate on.” Jonah strikes everyone as the right name. As Marco puts it (actually, he sings it), “The whale of history will spit out Jonah who will be twenty-five in the year 2000. That’s the time left for us to help him get off the shit-pile.”

FOR FANS IN 1976, *Jonah*’s appeal derived much less from an “it’s-about-us” identification and much more from the intelligence and wit of its politics, the charm of its characters, and its inventive non-linear structure. In an interview in *Cahiers du cinema* (no. 273, Jan.-Feb. 1977, reprinted in English in the North Atlantic volume), Tanner explained that “the starting point of the film . . . was the definitive . . . choice of eight actors.” (All but one—France’s wonderful Miou-Miou—were unknown to American audiences.) With photos of these actors as a catalyst, Tanner and Berger developed characters and wrote the screenplay.

Here’s how the film is put together, starting with the main characters:

Max: disillusioned writer and ex-New Left cadre who works as a proofreader at a left newspaper and is hooked on roulette as an escape from himself.

Madeleine: devotee of Tantric sexual practice who is working as a bank secretary until she can finance another trip to India.

Marguerite: no-nonsense owner (along with her husband) of an organic truck-farm which she’s determined to keep afloat.

Marcel: Marguerite’s husband who finds photographing and drawing animals more interesting than conversing with humans.

Marco: high-school history teacher whose

ingenious teaching methods and left politics get him into trouble.

Marie: French “border-worker” (she’s not allowed to spend nights in Switzerland) who undercharges low-income seniors at the Geneva supermarket where she works.

Mathieu: unemployed typographer and union cadre who believes in the transformative power of creative, enlightened education.

Mathilde: Mathieu’s wife, an assembly-line worker, who gives birth to Jonah (their fourth child) toward the end of the film.

Plot fragments link the characters together: Max meets Madeleine, who gives him documents about a bank scheme to buy up farm land just outside Geneva; Max warns Marcel and Marguerite that their farm is targeted; Marguerite hires Mathieu as a farm hand; Mathieu and Mathilde move their family into an apartment on the ground floor of the farmhouse; Marco lives near the farm and occasionally drops by; Marco meets Marie when she deliberately undercharges him at the supermarket.

Why eight names starting with *Ma*? To reveal the characters’ fabulous (of a fable) status, according to Tanner (Gitlin, *Film Quarterly*, Spring 1977).

MOST NARRATIVE FILMS are a succession of scenes in which one or more characters appear, but movie directors usually try to mask this episodic quality, aiming for the illusion of a seamless narrative flow. Tanner heightens the episodic. His scenes are like a string of little theater pieces with no transitions between them: one ends, the next begins. They jump from one character or combination of characters to another. By the end of the film, each main character has crossed paths with the others at least once, but only some of their individual storylines merge. All eight characters appear together only once.

The film’s structure has a purpose, and Tanner, of course, had a theory. As he explained in *Cahiers*:

I have always tried to reject realistic writing and reading [of films]. It’s true by contrast that I call on . . . a feeling of the real, for example, recognizable characters. But these elements only appear within the strict limits assigned to them—in the guise of reference points for the

audience. They are precisely circumscribed within the little “pieces” of the film, inside the scenes, but they never operate at the level of total structure . . . To disengage each time the fiction gets into gear permits the spectator to catch the ball on the first bounce and prohibits him from burying himself in his semi-conscious state. It gives him back his place and establishes the dialogue.

To keep the viewer from being passively sucked into the story, Tanner relies on the sequence shot: a relatively long, uninterrupted camera shot that is not edited (that is, not cut and spliced together with pieces of other shots). Since the time of D. W. Griffith, filmmakers who’ve wanted to create the illusion of seeing with the human eye (rapid, flexible movement; constant shifts in focus) have used editing techniques. But in *Jonah*, as Tanner explained,

Each scene is constituted solely from one shot, and the minimal cutting only intervenes in the case of a few intercut close-ups, . . . absolute technical necessity, or deficiencies of the actors vis-à-vis the text. . . . [The sequence shot] fits the epic structure (in the Brechtian sense) of the film, a sequence of scenes closed in on themselves in order the better to reply to each other. . . . The unity of the sequence shot makes it easier to detach the links of the chain.

The score by Jean-Marie Sénia also distances the viewer from what is happening on screen. No waves of orchestral music or familiar songs manipulate the audience’s emotional responses. The sparse percussive scoring—a single chord, a few bars of melody, a character breaking into song—pull the viewer out of the narrative. Tanner achieves the same effect by abruptly switching from color to black and white for five or ten seconds whenever a character slips into a reverie. As Mathilde works under the grim stare of the assembly-line foreman, a black-and-white shot shows him lying on a table, completely relaxed as she massages his back. Madeleine says to Max, “Have a dream and tell it to me.” He closes his eyes and sees black-and-white newsreel footage of street fighting in Paris in May 1968. The sequence shots of Rousseau’s statue are in black and white.

Tanner uses a black-and-white shot as the coda to a key scene—the only scene in which all eight characters meet: the start of the mural. Singly or in pairs, they enter the farmhouse yard which is bounded by a tall stone wall. The children stand Max up against the wall so they can trace his outline in chalk. He poses with his arms completely outstretched. (Madeleine quips, “It’s the prophet crucified. The prophet of ’68.”) Mathieu imagines a completed mural which we see as a black-and-white camera shot: full-scale portraits of the eight main characters painted on the wall in a childlike style. We see the completed mural just once more, this time in color. It’s the final shot of the film, captioned “A Day in 1980”: a five-year-old boy in red overalls is drawing on the mural of the eight little prophets. It’s *Jonah*.

The film has an open-ended narrative. Presumably Mathieu and Mathilde’s family is still living on the farm in 1980; it hasn’t been sold to developers. But the viewer can’t say for sure what the adult characters are doing by then. No cinematic convention (passionate kiss + swelling music = they live happily ever after) tells us what to assume.

It’s not surprising that *Jonah*’s no-certitudes brand of politics engaged leftists who had no certitudes in 1976. The film was convincingly exploratory, even future-oriented, because—unlike the later *Return of the Secaucus Seven* and *The Big Chill*—it wasn’t about the disappointments of a group of sixties veterans. Aside from Max and perhaps Mathieu, we don’t know what the characters in *Jonah* were doing a de-

cade earlier. When *Cahiers* asked Tanner about the relationship of *Jonah* to “the survivors of ’68, of the shipwreck,” he responded that “the events” of May 1968 had much less importance than the aftereffects. The events “brought out hopes and caused hidden desires to flower which have remained on the surface ever since. And that’s what it [*Jonah*] is about, rather than the fate of the ‘shipwrecked.’”

THE HOPES and desires at the heart of *Jonah*—dignity in work, education for democratic citizenship, environmental stewardship of the planet, non-material fulfillment—still occupy the democratic left; we’re still living in the extended aftermath of the sixties. I think this accounts in part for *Jonah*’s attractiveness for viewers today: the politics still resonate. But in addition, the characters retain all their charm. And other qualities are more apparent now—at least to me. I can’t think of a movie since *Jonah* that has more successfully portrayed humane interconnectedness within a community without going sentimental. As for its innovative artistry—screenplay, camera work, acting, and musical score—*Jonah* has had no heirs among political films released in the United States. Tanner and Berger achieved a uniquely successful mix of serious ideas and story. In short, *Jonah*, which turns twenty-eight in the year 2004, has barely aged. ●

JOANNE BARKAN is a writer who lives in New York City and on Cape Cod.

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The eight main characters appear together in only one scene: the start of the mural.



The final scene: Jonah draws on the mural of the "eight little prophets."

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The Home and the World

Film Documentaries and Social Crises

Morris Dickstein

THOUGH FULL-LENGTH documentary films go back to the work of Robert Flaherty in the 1920s (*Nanook of the North*, *Man of Aran*), they have always been the uncommercial stepchild of movies that tell made-up stories. In their marginal way, documentaries have flourished in times of social crisis, and they enjoyed a special vogue in the 1930s, when independent filmmakers, inspired by politically committed Soviet artists, banded together in such organizations as the Film and Photo League. Prone to advocacy, documentaries have often been criticized for manipulating their material. In Germany, Leni Riefenstahl perfected propaganda into an art form. The U.S. government itself sponsored Pare Lorentz's Great Depression documentaries, *The Plow That Broke the Plains* and *The River*, as well as Frank Capra's morale-building "Why We Fight" series during World War II. Documentary films all but disappeared from theaters after 1945. But their aura of authenticity influenced narrative films, including depression movies like *The Grapes of Wrath*; postwar films noirs in the United States, and neorealist films in Italy; politically engaged films about the 1960s like Robert Kramer's *Ice* and Haskell Wexler's *Medium Cool*; and docudramas about real events—half history, half thriller—such as Gillo Pontecorvo's *The Battle of Algiers* and Costa-Gavras's *Z*, *State of Siege*, and *Missing*. But the only documentaries released commercially were *National Geographic*-style travel movies in new formats like Cinerama along with family fare about nature and animals directed at children, a specialty of Disney.

As television grew more sophisticated, it began, timidly at first, to pursue public issues behind the news headlines. The work of Ed-

ward R. Murrow and his CBS producer, Fred Friendly—their measured but brave exposé of McCarthy, for example—initially had no successors, especially at the networks. But the turmoil of the 1960s created a new generation of *cinéma vérité* artists who used lighter, more mobile equipment, beginning with Frederick Wiseman, who immersed himself in social institutions such as an asylum for the “criminally insane” in Massachusetts and a high school in Philadelphia; D.A. Pennebaker, who pioneered rock concert movies such as *Don't Look Back* (on Bob Dylan) and *Monterey Pop*; and Albert and David Maysles, who made *Salesman* and *Grey Gardens* as well as the darkest of rock movies, *Gimme Shelter*, about a Rolling Stones concert at Altamont where a fan was knifed to death. The decade culminated in one very long documentary, *Woodstock*, in which the music, the counterculture, and the promotional hype converged, a film that gave a whole generation the vicarious feeling of having been there.

BUT THE REAL story of documentary filmmaking picked up a year or two later with a movie made for French television although not shown there until many years later, Marcel Ophüls's *The Sorrow and the Pity*. Unlike *cinéma vérité*, with its deliberately raw technique and sense of total immersion in the moment, it was a somber, reflective investigation of a taboo subject—French collaboration under German occupation, the myths and facts of the French resistance—and it transformed not only how nonfiction movies were made but how the world, and especially the French, understood those soiled pages of history. *The Sorrow and the Pity* coincided with a new wave of interest in the Holocaust, an outpouring of memory, shame, and moral witness that had been dammed up for a quarter of a century. Without its example, Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* might not have been made fifteen years

later. Along with the war itself, the hidden history of the Holocaust and the memories of survivors would provide an inexhaustible flow of material for filmmakers for decades to come.

It's hard to imagine another subject on which the film medium has so amplified the historical record. But our present lives are often as shrouded from each other as the past, and this has repeatedly challenged filmmakers to excavate the buried dramas of family relationships. The great breakthrough for television documentary in 1973 was the twelve-part Public Broadcasting System series called *An American Family*, about Bill and Pat Loud and their five children, an upper middle-class family in Santa Barbara. It reflected many of the tensions in the post-sixties American family, from the homosexuality of one of the sons to the conflicts that led to the divorce of the parents. But above all, because the film crew essentially lived with the family for seven months, the movie tapped a surprising vein of eager self-exposure that has since become endemic to Americans. In the wake of the sixties, barriers between public and private life were falling everywhere; suddenly, very little seemed off limits. Documentary authenticity is an elusive thing because everyone performs for the camera. In *An American Family* the uneasy self-dramatization of the subjects answered to the voyeuristic curiosity of the audience, which showed an unexpected interest in other people's daily lives. The pop sociology of the 1950s had migrated into television as viewers looked for a glass that would mirror their own experience.

An American Family was the first documentary to become a major conversation piece; as such it was the forerunner not of today's factitious Reality TV, with its photogenic participants and manufactured drama, but of recent movies like *Capturing the Friedmans*, Andrew Jarecki's story of a Great Neck, Long Island, family torn apart by a 1987 scandal involving pedophilia and child abuse. Ironically, the director came to the subject while researching a movie about party clowns. David Friedman, who called himself "Silly Billy," was one of the most sought-after clowns on the children's birthday-party circuit. But Jarecki learned that David's father, Arnold, and his youngest

brother, Jesse, had pleaded guilty to multiple counts of abusing minors during after-school computer classes in the basement of their home. For reasons that must go beyond exhibitionism, David had compulsively recorded the Friedmans' lives from the happiest days of his childhood to the worst quarrels at each new turn of the scandal. Somehow Jarecki persuaded him to cooperate in exposing this family trauma to a large audience; no doubt David hoped the film would help exonerate his father and brother.

But instead of mounting a case for their guilt or innocence, Jarecki stands back from making any judgment; at the same time, he luridly digs into the sensational elements of the case, including the students' often dubious and contradictory charges and the moralizing exaggerations of local investigators, who clearly put words into witnesses' mouths. Even with their own consent, the film needlessly violates the privacy of its subjects. It offers empty speculation about the sex life of the parents and includes a clip of David's tormented video diary in which he says that no one, but no one, should be seeing this but himself. It withholds and then springs information about the father's suicide in prison and the homosexuality of his younger brother, whom he may or may not have abused as a child. It makes the mother the goat of the family, at once clueless, disloyal, and unsympathetic. It proved to be a slickly crafted and brilliantly marketed movie that left a very bad taste. Partly because of its clever detachment, it touched a raw nerve and evoked reams of discussion, but I was almost sorry I had seen it.

DOCUMENTARY MOVIES are often caught between the numbing effect of talking heads and you-are-there images of what supposedly happened. Where Jarecki feigns a postmodern indeterminacy, a muck-raking populist like Michael Moore, casting himself as a Capra character, builds movies like *Roger & Me* and *Bowling for Columbine* around his own quixotic crusade to bring the bad guys to heel. Because the editing in documentaries is so crucial, these films can be highly manipulative. Often they crystallize around misunderstood or enigmatic subjects that have left behind only a fragmentary visual record. The best

historical documentaries go to great lengths to avoid stereotyped archival material, imagery deadened by repetition. Lanzmann's *Shoah*, in a spirit of purism, eliminated newsreel footage entirely, substituting marathon interviews with survivors; conversations with a historian, Raul Hilberg; and subtly ironic images of antiquated railway cars and tranquil killing sites as they appear today. In *Capturing the Friedmans*, the home movies serve as the archive of family life at its most carefree and most troubled. These are punctuated by David's anguished assertions of his father's and brother's innocence and by the level-headed comments of a journalist named Debbie Nathan, who sees evidence of a classic case of recovered memory, with all its distortions, and a tabloid-fed mass hysteria. Without taking a stand, the film leaves us with the impression of a painful miscarriage of justice.

If any film could serve as an antidote to this acrid sense of shattered lives and a dysfunctional family, it might be another of this year's widely seen documentaries, Jeff Blitz's *Spellbound*. Its unlikely subject was the 1999 National Spelling Bee, sponsored by the Scripps Howard newspaper chain since 1925. Like most other movies, documentaries are essentially about people, the look on their faces, the inflection of their voices, the wrinkles of mind and character implied by their body language and their interplay with others. Movies about children always run the risk of cuteness, because kids often play to the camera with little self-consciousness. *Spellbound* escapes this pitfall by embedding these nerdy, striving kids solidly in their family settings, which range from that of a Mexican American ranch hand in Texas or an extended black family in Washington, D.C., to the middle-class homes of Indian Americans and Northeastern Jews. Some of the families are puzzled but proud to have raised a mutant, a child with a phenomenal memory, unshakeable determination, and the focus and discipline of a champion athlete. Other parents, acting out their own ambitions, coach the kids so relentlessly that it borders on child abuse. One Indian American father drills his son on seven to eight thousand words a day and calls in specialists to work with him on words from foreign lan-

guages. Like so many immigrants, he believes that there's "no way you can fail in this country if you work hard."

Spellbound only hints at the dark side of this competitive pressure, which I recall quite vividly from the citywide *World-Telegram and Sun* Spelling Bee as I knew it in the sixth grade, where I tripped up in the finals on "jardinière" and "indefatigable." But preparation in those days was limited, at least where I came from: you ran through some vocabulary lists, then just went in and said what you knew. Memorizing arcane words does not involve major thinking or higher learning, but director Jeff Blitz uses it to highlight a side of American childhood and schooling that gets little attention compared to sports, social adjustment, flawed instruction, and learning problems. These are wonderfully bright, alert, nervously enthusiastic children, drunk on language. As they converge on the finals in Washington, the film interweaves eight separate family histories that demonstrate the diversity of America's population at its most attractive. These families' attitudes range from relentless joint effort ("We all had to pitch in to help," says an Indian American mother) to detached but beaming pride or wonder that such a prodigy could appear in their midst. The most moving is the taciturn reaction of the Mexican, who still speaks no English after twenty years on a ranch in rural Texas. His fully Americanized daughter, Angela, becomes a local celebrity, yet has somehow, like most of the other kids in the film, remained "normal" and unaffected. His grown-up son, so Mexican yet already American, tells us the older man's story with simple but piercing eloquence: his flight from Mexico, his years of hard work, his hesitation about venturing as far as Washington to see his daughter compete. But the spelling bee has already taken his family beyond his wildest dreams. Even when Angela loses, his son tells us that if his father "were to die today, he would die a happy person."

IF FAMILIES have become a key subject in the current surge of documentaries, politics and history remain central to the genre. There appears to be no limit to our fascination with the political turbulence of the 1960s, a period not only colorful in itself but the bed-

rock of so many of our political divisions today. Two recent documentaries probe the still-open wound of the Vietnam War and the radical movements that sprang up against it: Errol Morris's *The Fog of War*, essentially a long interview with former secretary of defense and Pentagon whiz kid Robert McNamara, and *The Weather Underground*, directed by Sam Green and Bill Siegel, which chronicles the political journey and second thoughts of antiwar radicals who took the Students for a Democratic Society from protest to violence and low-grade terrorism. In a sense it's unfair to compare these films because Morris, in works like *The Thin Blue Line*, *A Brief History of Time, Fast, Cheap and Out of Control*, and, most recently, *Mr. Death*, has developed into one of the most quirky, creative, and deeply respected documentarians. Whereas the directors of *The Weather Underground* are talented novices, Morris has a restless, probing mind, a true cinematic imagination, and an unpredictable affinity for offbeat subjects. Yet these two movies, both grounded in interviews, share a common problem. Their larger subject is history, a vexed and contested history, yet they keep us too much enclosed within the point of view of their protagonists: their memories and reflections, their insights and self-deceptions, their cunning or unconscious efforts to vindicate themselves even as they fault their own past thinking. Invariably, we respond to the quality of their performances as much as we judge their political choices. When the subjects in a movie are as articulate as these people, their way of explaining and defending themselves, if it goes unchallenged, can badly skew our understanding of the issues.

Both the Weather people and the former secretary of defense have a great deal to answer for, though the cabinet secretary, of course, wielded incomparably greater power. McNamara convinces us that plans were afoot for a gradual withdrawal from Vietnam just before John Kennedy's assassination, but he never explains why he went along with Lyndon Johnson's escalation and kept silent even after he had been forced out as secretary. He is much more frank about his role in Curtis LeMay's firebombing of sixty-seven Japanese cities in 1945, which might have left the two

of them open to trial as war criminals had the United States lost, than he is about Vietnam, where he simply argues that "the fog of war" clouded everyone's judgment. This is curiously similar to the repeated assertion by the aging veterans of the Weather Underground that "the Vietnam War made us crazy," to which one of them adds, "When you feel you have right on your side, you can do some horrific things." Green and Siegel offer some sharp and angry criticism by Todd Gitlin as a counterweight to these superficial rationalizations, and they give the last word to the more self-critical speakers. But like most documentary filmmakers they essentially identify with their subjects, giving them a forum for reflections that are often engrossing but clarify very little. Despite their initial idealism, the Weather people were a self-destructive splinter group caught up in fantasies of violent revolution. Above all, the film gives little sense of other options open to the antiwar left during the Vietnam era. Instead we get lines like this excerpt from an unpublished memoir by Mark Rudd: "I was overwhelmed by hate. I cherished my hate as a badge of moral superiority." This is a kind of self-criticism, but it is far from illuminating.

THE FILM ADDS up to some interesting although unrevealing character studies of mostly invisible lives, lives that travestied the deep convictions and moral anguish of so many Americans during the 1960s. The characters come across as attractive figures who have shielded themselves from any real insight into their own past. It has always been a paradox that many young sixties radicals, including some of my students at Columbia, were immensely appealing as individuals—morally engaged, funny, drunk on ideas—but stopped making sense when they disappeared into the group, especially after the summer of 1968 and the election of Richard Nixon. Both *The Weather Underground* and *The Fog of War* seem to be political films, but they actually peel us back from politics to personality, which is the subject of most movies anyway. Though *The Weather Underground* brings back a sense of the times, and both movies find fresh, un-hackneyed historical footage, *The Fog of War* stands out as the full-length portrait of a bril-

liant advocate locked in a morally dubious position, using confession as a form of self-exculpation. McNamara and the former radical terrorists are people who made terrible mistakes when they were young. Unlike some of their contemporaries, they lived long enough to reconsider, but they are not especially introspective. The ex-Weather people are so masked that in some ways they still seem to be living underground, adrift, cut loose from their historical moment.

Discussing his film after a press screening at the New York Film Festival, Morris anticipated that it would be criticized for not “contextualizing.” Plenty of books about the Vietnam era offer context, he said, but he had always wanted to make a film about one person, history from the inside out. “This movie is deliberately unbalanced, with only one side, one point of view,” he admits, disarming criticism as effectively as McNamara. In the course of his interviews he had come to sympathize with the man, though he understood that, like the rest of us, he was vain, ambitious, and self-justifying. “People reveal themselves through language,” he argued. Clearly, he counts on viewers to understand more about McNamara than the man himself was willing to expose.

This was precisely the bet he placed in his

previous film, *Mr. Death*, a profile of an American eccentric, Fred Leuchter, whose specialty was the technical side of capital punishment, the mechanics of execution, but who got caught up in the twilight zone of Holocaust denial and ruined his life. With McNamara, Morris’s wager, really, was on the power of the film medium to reveal character, on his own uncanny gifts as an interviewer, which rival those of Ophuls and Lanzmann, and on the ingenious ways he finds of counterpointing his subject’s story—with Philip Glass’s eerily effective music, for example, or with mesmerizing images of long lines of gigantic dominoes falling across a map of Southeast Asia. Working with mood, metaphor, animation, or recreation, he expands the terrain on which documentary operates. More formalist than historian, he extracts eleven “lessons” from McNamara’s story, but uses them mainly to serve as chapter breaks. Whatever its limits as a political investigation, *The Fog of War* is a singular specimen of the documentary film as a personal portrait of a key historical figure and as a gripping work of art. ●

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Still Separate, Still Unequal

The Continuing Struggle for Racial Justice in American Education

Leo Casey

THIS YEAR MARKS the fiftieth anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education*, the landmark Supreme Court decision that declared unconstitutional de jure segregation in American public schools. After *Brown*, one could no longer speak of racial justice without considering the state of American education, nor could one reasonably discuss American education without addressing the need for racial justice.

And yet, in a way that would have been unimaginable even ten years ago, an American conservatism that once fought court-ordered school desegregation at every turn is making the claim that its educational agenda provides the only hope for children of color trapped in failing inner-city schools. The right now declares, "We are the true heirs of *Brown*."

In a concurring opinion in the recent *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris* case, which upheld the constitutionality of school vouchers used to attend religious schools, Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas quoted Frederick Douglass: "Education means emancipation," and, said Thomas, today's "inner city public schools deny emancipation" to students of color. Thomas and other conservatives contend that educational progress for African Americans and other racial and ethnic minorities lie not in remedies designed to bring equity to public schooling, but in vouchers, privatization, and the dismantling of what they call the public school "monopoly."

How We Got Here

Brown struck down laws mandating racial segregation, and, after prolonged efforts that finally overcame segregationist justice, made possible meaningful desegregation in public

schools in the American South at the end of the 1960s and the start of the 1970s. But attempts at dismantling de facto segregation in other regions of the nation were less successful, and they halted in the mid-1970s as resistance to school busing reached a fever pitch, fiscal crises took a toll on magnet programs designed to promote voluntary racial integration, and conservatives discovered race as a "wedge" issue. Starting with *Milliken*, a spate of Rehnquist Court decisions in the late 1970s and 1980s undercut judicial mandates for school desegregation. Since the early 1990s, there has been a trend toward the resegregation of American public schools, which Gary Orfield and his colleagues at Harvard's Civil Rights Project have carefully documented.

Those who are not familiar with America's urban public schools may not appreciate the enormity of de facto segregation in our nation's classrooms. In the fourteen years that I taught in a large, academically respectable inner-city high school in Brooklyn, New York, I never saw a single white student in my classroom. During that period, of the tens of thousands who attended my school—located a short five-minute stroll from the gentrified neighborhood of Park Slope—only one student was white. And there were another twenty large high schools in Brooklyn alone that had similar profiles: New York City and State schools are among the most segregated in the nation. Millions of American students today learn about the *Brown* decision in classrooms that look very much like those of 1954 Topeka, Kansas.

And just as in 1954, that which is separate is unequal. Inner-city public schools are more often located in overcrowded, rundown facilities, more frequently stuck with inadequate and out-of-date books, learning technology, and laboratory equipment, and more often staffed by inexperienced and ill-prepared teachers teaching large, oversized classes.

BOOKS AND STUDIES DISCUSSED IN THIS ESSAY

**THE AFFIRMATIVE ACTION FRAUD:
CAN WE RESTORE THE AMERICAN CIVIL RIGHTS VISION?**
by Clint Bolick

Cato Institute, 1996 \$19.95

THE VOUCHER WARS: WAGING THE LEGAL BATTLE OVER SCHOOL CHOICE
Cato Institute, 2003 \$12

BRIDGING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP
John Chubb and Tom Loveless, eds.
Brookings Institution Press, 2002 \$18.95

**THERE ARE NO SHORTCUTS: HOW AN INNER-CITY TEACHER —WINNER OF THE
AMERICAN TEACHER AWARD — INSPIRES HIS STUDENTS AND CHALLENGES US TO
RETHINK THE WAY WE EDUCATE OUR CHILDREN**
by Rafe Esquith
Pantheon, 2003 \$21

THE AMERICAN DREAM AND THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS
by Jennifer Hochschild and Nathan Scovronick
Oxford University Press, 2003 \$35

CIVIL RIGHTS PROJECT OF HARVARD UNIVERSITY
<http://www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu/>

THE BLACK-WHITE TEST SCORE GAP
by Christopher Jencks and Meredith Phillips
Brookings Institution Press, 1998 \$19.95

“EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AND BLACK-WHITE INEQUALITY”
by Jonathan Jacobson
National Center for Education Statistics: July 2001, <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2001/inequality/>

INEQUALITY AT THE STARTING GATE
by Valerie Lee and David Burkham
Economic Policy Institute, 2002 \$13.50

SCHOOLS, VOUCHERS AND THE AMERICAN PUBLIC
by Terry Moe
Brookings Institution Press, 2001 \$22.95

**DISMANTLING DESEGREGATION:
THE QUIET REVERSAL OF BROWN V. BOARD OF EDUCATION**
by Gary Orfield
New Press, 1996 \$17.95

**YOUNG, GIFTED AND BLACK: PROMOTING HIGH ACHIEVEMENT AMONG
AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENTS**
by Theresa Perry, Claude Steele, and Asa Hilliard
Beacon Press, 2003 \$25

**“TIME TO MOVE ON: AFRICAN-AMERICAN AND WHITE PARENTS SET AN AGENDA FOR
PUBLIC SCHOOLS,” PUBLIC AGENDA**
<http://www.publicagenda.org/PDFStore/PDFs/MoveOn.pdf>

NO EXCUSES: CLOSING THE RACIAL GAP IN LEARNING
by Abigail and Stephan Thernstrom
Simon and Schuster, 2003 \$26

CHOOSING EQUALITY: SCHOOL CHOICE, THE CONSTITUTION, AND CIVIL SOCIETY
by Joseph Viteritti
Brookings Institution Press, 1999 \$19.95

Conservative Opportunism

In *The American Dream and the Public Schools*, Jennifer Hochschild and Nathan Scovronick show, in convincing detail, how the post-*Brown* impetus for school desegregation was checked at every turn after 1975. Yet over roughly the same time period, the American armed forces were successfully transformed, from top to bottom, into a fully integrated institution. This remarkable contrast can only be explained by differences in political will—by a combination of American conservatism's dogged resistance to school desegregation efforts and American liberalism's desertion of this particular field of battle.

There is no more telling sign of the resultant grim political reality than the fact that African American parents, who have been the most consistent and forceful supporters of integrated schools, have increasingly given up hope that the nation has the will to realize a democratic vision of racial integration in its schools. Although eight in ten black parents believe that it is important that their children's schools be racially integrated, according to a *Public Agenda* study, they pragmatically focus on finding other, more immediately viable ways of providing their children with quality education. As long as American education is separate, they reason, let it at least be more equal.

Advocates of equity in education, Hochschild and Scovronick note, have increasingly taken up the issue of school financing in efforts to obtain the resources that would sustain a quality education in inner-city schools. Campaigns for school financing equity are an essential front line of the struggle to realize the promise of *Brown*. But they cannot be the only front, and they cannot be carried on only through the courts. A real political price is now being paid for the tacit liberal abandonment of the struggle to integrate American public education. Freed from their historic role of opposing racial integration—for what movement on behalf of integration is there now to counter?—conservatives have set out to reinvent themselves as the standard-bearers of equity in American education.

A successful reinvention along these lines is not a foregone conclusion. Outside of the inner city, Americans are substantially satisfied

with the quality of their public schools and unprepared to turn them into a radical social experiment of the right: ballot measures calling for universal school vouchers have regularly gone down to defeat. Moreover, opponents can point out that where vouchers have been universally introduced, in New Zealand and in Pinochet's Chile under the direction of Milton Friedman, they have resulted in substantially greater racial and economic-class segregation.

Still, conservatives have been resourceful in advancing the cause of school vouchers. The work of leading voucher advocate Terry Moe, *Schools, Vouchers and the American Public*, is instructive in this respect. Moe argues that the American public is caught in the grips of a "public school ideology," which blinds them to the truth of conservative arguments about the inferiority of public schooling. An aficionado of "rational choice" theory, Moe declares ordinary Americans "rationally ignorant" on matters of educational policy. What this means for voucher proponents, he concludes, is that they must eschew the laissez-faire capitalism of a Milton Friedman, with its insistence on a universal system of vouchers, and develop more narrowly tailored proposals that will home in on the "Achilles heel" of American public education—its failing inner-city schools. Moe has in mind measures such as the Cleveland program recently approved by the U.S. Supreme Court, in which vouchers are made available only to students who would otherwise attend failing schools. Well-to-do and middle-class parents will not object to programs that leave their public schools intact, the reasoning goes; and in the absence of a significant civil rights movement fighting to bring quality education to inner-city public schools, there will always be enough desperate inner-city parents prepared to take a chance on the only game in town, vouchers.

Moe's strategy is politically astute. It allows conservative voucher advocates to pose as the forces fighting for equity against a public school status quo, but in a way that never seriously challenges the separate and unequal character of American education, but actually relies upon it. This positioning is more a political marketing strategy than an expression of genuine moral conviction. Moe commends Clint

Bolick, co-founder of the Institute for Justice, which organized much of the legal defense of the Milwaukee and Cleveland voucher programs, as a visionary leader of the new, equity-based voucher movement. Bolick first made a national name for himself in the pages of the *Wall Street Journal* by attacking Bill Clinton's nominee for head of the civil rights division of the Department of Justice, Lani Guinier, as a "quota queen"; he has since drafted federal legislation to outlaw all affirmative action and submitted an amicus brief in the recent unsuccessful effort to have the Supreme Court prohibit affirmative action. Bolick is on record as denying the significance of racism in American life, and his account of the "voucher wars" details his partnership with leading right-wing luminaries such as Ken Starr and think tanks such as the ultra-libertarian Cato Institute. It is hard to imagine a less convincing advocate of racial justice.

Nor is Bolick an aberration. One looks in vain for any of the leading proponents of the equity argument for vouchers in the campaigns to advocate remedies for the vast inequalities in school financing and resources, much less as part of a movement for racial integration. Where is Howard Fuller, former superintendent of the Milwaukee Public Schools, who formed the pro-voucher Black Alliance for Educational Options with the support of right-wing foundations; Joseph Viteritti, author of the leading vouchers equity book, *Choosing Equality*; Floyd Flake, the minister and former Queens congressional representative who now sits on the board of the largest for-profit educational corporation, Edison Schools and heads its Charter School Division? For them, equity only counts when it can be used in an argument for school vouchers.

The Class Dimension

In the last few years, the public focus on questions of racial justice in American education has increasingly come to rest on what is called the achievement gap—the disparity between the educational achievements of white students and African American, Latino/a and Native American students. (The gap cuts across Asian American students, with students of Chinese and Japanese origin performing at the

same or higher level as white students, while students from the Pacific Islands, the Philippines and other mainland Asian nations generally perform at a level comparable to other students of color.) The evidence of the achievement gap is considerable and indisputable: there are aggregate score differentials on a vast array of standardized tests; disparate placement rates in more rigorous programs of instruction; and differentials in attendance, drop-out and graduation rates, from pre-school through college.

Moreover, there is compelling evidence that the gap plays a significant part in continuing racial inequality in the United States. The current income gap and employment gap between African American and white women, and the even greater income gap and employment gap between African American men and white men, is more and more attributable to differences in educational achievement, economists say. (A declining real minimum wage, falling rates of private sector unionization, and job discrimination are also in play, especially for African American men.)

There is general agreement among scholars that socioeconomic class accounts for a major portion, but not all, of the achievement gap: people of color are more likely to live in poverty, as a result of the legacy of historical racism, and the conditions of poverty militate against the full development of cognitive skills, from poor prenatal care to homes that have few if any books in them. In *Inequality at the Starting Gate*, Valerie Lee and David Burkham gather the available evidence and studies to present a powerful argument that there is a substantial gap in cognitive skills, overwhelmingly socioeconomic in origin and nature, before children even enter the school doors for the first time.

After formal schooling starts, a family in poverty is less able to provide optimum support for schoolwork and homework and less able to sustain, over the summer vacation, the academic advances that a child makes during the school year. Moreover, families of children in poverty are often transient, leading to constant changes in the children's school. But most significantly, children in poverty largely end up in schools segregated by socioeconomic class

and often by race that lack the human and material resources to provide the quality education that upper-middle-class and well-to-do students receive.

The Racial Dimension

Still there remains what one might call the racial dimension of the gap. When one controls for socioeconomic class, there is a small racial achievement gap among students of different races in the higher socioeconomic strata and in post-secondary education. Counter-intuitively, the gap between middle-class black and white students is, on some measures, greater than the differential between poor black and white students. The reasons for this racial dimension are inevitably a subject of controversy, given that we live in a society that has historically denigrated the intelligence of people of color and in which theories of racial intellectual inferiority are still given credence in some quarters of the right. There is an understandable fear that a discussion of the specifically racial component of the achievement gap will feed into such prejudices, blaming the victims of the gap for its existence, as Asa Hilliard argues in *Young, Gifted and Black*.

Yet there is more here than can be explained by cultural bias in tests or a lack of cultural understanding and low expectations on the part of teachers. Racism does not exist simply in the prejudice and ignorance of specific social actors; after centuries of embodiment in American law and social practice, it has become part of the sinew of our culture and our psyches. Claude Steele and the late John Ogbu did pioneering work in studying some of the debilitating and harmful effects on academic performance that come with struggling to achieve educationally in a society in which one's intelligence is disparaged and under attack. In a series of experiments with Stanford and Michigan undergraduates, Steele and colleagues (*Young, Gifted and Black* and *The Black-White Test Score Gap*) showed that students taking a test under a "stereotype threat"—the threat of being viewed through the lens of a negative stereotype—perform significantly lower than they do when the threat is removed or diminished. Students' long-term response to stereotype threats are varied, rang-

ing from avoidance to counter-stereotypic behavior, from disengagement to "disidentification." But most often the result is lowered academic performance. In an ethnographic study (*Black American Students in an Affluent Suburb*) of the racially integrated, upper-middle-class Ohio community and school district of Shaker Heights, Ogbu explains how a racial minority trapped in an oppressive caste system develops an oppositional culture of distrust toward the dominant culture, such that academic success within that dominant culture becomes identified with disloyalty to one's own peers, described as "acting white." This oppositional culture leads, Ogbu contends, to academic disengagement on the part of those students, which, in turn, breeds academic setbacks.

Patterns and Remedies

What effect does schooling have on the achievement gap? We lack the data to answer this question definitively, as there are no data sets and studies that follow cohorts, identified by race, from kindergarten through the twelfth grade. Two groups of scholars, one led by Meredith Phillips (*The Black-White Test Gap*) and one led by Jonathan Jacobson for the National Center for Education Statistics (*Educational Achievement and Black-White Inequality*), have patched together existing studies of different age cohorts, and arrived at similar conclusions. With respect to literacy, the differential is substantially the same at the end of the twelfth grade as it was when formal schooling began; in mathematics, the gap remains the same throughout the early years, but widens significantly in middle school and remains stable thereafter. This pattern conforms to what we know about the overall performance of American schools: in literacy, American students generally do well in international comparisons, but in mathematics, there is a significant decline in performance in the middle school years without a subsequent recovery. It seems that the achievement gap shadows the general strengths and weaknesses of American education.

The most important pattern in the achievement gap lies in the way that it steadily diminished in size from the mid-1970s through the late 1980s and then began to increase again

in the 1990s. The reasons for this trend reversal are complex, as there are multiple variables in play, yet they are also central to any effort to abate and eliminate the gap. One factor that seems to have been crucial to the size of the gap was school desegregation. From the period when substantive desegregation began in the South up until the period when American education began to resegregate, the racial achievement gap diminished; moreover, the gap declined the greatest in the South, which was undergoing meaningful racial integration, and least in the Northeast, which saw little desegregation. Other central factors were improvements in the educational achievement and the socioeconomic status of African American parents. In the wake of the civil rights movement, affirmative action opened up post-secondary education and higher status employment to people of color, while civil rights legislation reduced job discrimination, and many Great Society programs improved job opportunities for poorer people of color. Additionally, educational programs introduced during the Great Society, such as Head Start, had a positive impact on the performance of poor students. By contrast, the effects of the rollback of the Great Society programs and opportunities for people of color that began under the Reagan administration came into full force in the 1990s. And although the 1990s were a decade of unprecedented economic growth and expansion, they were also a period of increased income inequality. During the 1990s, the achievement gap followed the same pattern as the wage gap.

WHAT THESE patterns suggest is that the problem of the achievement gap is not simply one of breakdowns in schooling. It is also the story of reversals and setbacks in broader social and economic policy, as Richard Rothstein has argued. The remedies thus lie as much in policies directed at promoting racial integration and reducing poverty as they lie in education itself.

That having been said, there is still an important educational agenda to be pursued if the achievement gap is to be reduced, much less eliminated. Much of this agenda involves the replacement of separate and unequal education with quality education for all and the full

financing of programs designed to help low-achieving students raise themselves up to standard. We know that Head Start and similar quality pre-school programs make a significant difference in preparing children living in poverty for school, and that they must be expanded. Unfortunately, the positive effects of Head Start diminish over time, as these students are placed in resource-poor, failing schools.

We know from careful studies of the STAR program in Tennessee and the SAGE program in Wisconsin that smaller class size, especially in the earlier grades where students acquire fundamental literacy and numeracy skills, makes a difference, and that it has the most positive effects for children living in poverty and African American children. Yet it is upper-middle-class and well-to-do students who most often have the smallest classes. We know that a well-prepared, skilled, and experienced teacher is critical to every student's success—the “value-added” statistical studies of the University of Tennessee's Bill Sanders show definitively that each teacher makes a difference, and that students almost never overcome the burden of being taught by a number of novice, ill-prepared, and unskilled teachers in a row.

And we know that schools need proven curricula, together with teachers professionally prepared to use them. But inner-city schools with a constant revolving door of novice teachers often lack a basic curriculum that such teachers could use to teach the most academically disadvantaged young people. In sum, we know that for most of the things that can make a tangible difference in the achievement gap, we must provide inner-city schools with the human and material resources they now lack, and that to do that, we must redress the inequalities in school financing. That is why campaigns around fiscal equity in education are crucial to racial justice in education, even if they do not directly challenge growing racial segregation in our schools.

The racial dimension of the achievement gap must also be addressed. Bob Moses's Algebra Project, which has been previously discussed in *Dissent* (“The Algebra Project and Democratic Politics,” Winter 1999 and “Radi-

cal Equations," Fall 2001), is one powerful model of how it is possible to organize against the achievement gap. The Algebra Project focuses on middle school mathematics, where the achievement gap is at its zenith and combines an ambitious academic program and a pedagogically innovative curriculum with organizing efforts directed at building parental and student empowerment in education.

The value of the Algebra Project lies in the way it combines rigorous academics with essential social and cultural supports. As Claude Steele has found, African American college students respond positively to teacher-student interactions where they understand that high academic standards are being used and that the teacher believes they are capable of meeting those standards. In order to counter the stereotype threat, Steele explains, the teacher must be explicit about these two points, must actually use high standards and genuinely believe in the ability of the students to meet them, and must give critical feedback to the students on what they should do to bring their work up to those standards. Steele reports on an experimental program he and a number of colleagues oversaw at the University of Michigan in which the achievement gap between participating African American and white first-year students was almost entirely erased by creating a racially integrated "living and learning community" with a focus on challenging academics, social supports, and affirmations of student ability.

At the elementary and secondary level, it is also vital to develop programs of ability affirmation to work in tandem with rigorous academics. Successful programs designed to establish stronger family-school and community-school partnerships, such as that pioneered by Yale psychologist and educator James Comer, and for mobilizing community resources behind academic achievement, such as the NAACP's ACT-SO program, need to be expanded and replicated. Programs that form academically oriented identity and peer groups among African American and Latino/a students and promote cooperative and group studying are particularly promising. These techniques have proven exceptionally successful among Chinese American students and at Xavier Uni-

versity in New Orleans, a small historically black college that sends twice as many African American students to medical school as any other college in the United States. Special attention needs to be paid to initiating students of color into a community of scholars, by providing them with role models and mentors. Small schools, in which every student is well known by the teaching staff, provide more of the individual attention and care, more of the extra-academic support, that students of color say is lacking in their current schools. However, such care can not be at the expense of a rigorous course of academic instruction.

The Conservative Response

No Excuses, the latest book on American race relations by Abigail and Stephan Thernstrom, is the most complete attempt to examine the achievement gap from the right. The way to end the achievement gap, the Thernstroms contend, is to promote school vouchers and choice, increase standardized testing, and return to traditional curricula.

The flaws in *No Excuses* lie as much in the arguments the Thernstroms marshal on behalf of the predictable conservative policy conclusions as they do in the conclusions themselves. Early on in *No Excuses*, as the Thernstroms briefly acknowledge the reversal in the decline of the achievement gap which took place at the start of the 1990s, a particularly telling passage appears. They note that the achievement gap is once again increasing, as this development fits their general argument on the severity of the problem. But they offer no explanation of why the gap decreased from 1975 through the late 1980s and no explanation of why it began to increase again in the 1990s, leaving the reader with a single cryptic notation that the reversal took place "for reasons we do not know." This allows them to elaborate their policy proposals unencumbered by any sense of what policies have actually diminished the achievement gap and what policies reversed that progress.

On this basis, the Thernstroms set about to demonstrate that the separate and unequal character of American education is a series of myths that have nothing to do with the achievement gap. Problem after problem—racial seg-

regation, unequal and inadequate funding and resources, oversized classes, academic tracking, novice unprepared teachers—are simply defined out of existence. Let us look at one example, their argument that American schools do not have a problem of racial segregation, but a modest “racial imbalance” that is correcting itself. The analysis of Gary Orfield and others that points to increasing racial segregation, the Thernstroms argue, incorrectly focuses on the extent of integration between white students and students of color, taken as a group; it does not consider the rates of integration among different groups of non-white students or the absolute numbers of white students in the district.

According to this logic, the Brooklyn high school in which I taught was not really racially segregated because there was a mixture of African American, African Caribbean, Asian American, Puerto Rican, Dominican, and Central American students, some native-born, some immigrant, and the immediate neighborhood the school drew from was largely populated by people of color. My students and fellow teachers certainly understood that there was a pedagogical and cultural value to the mix of cultures that made up our school. But we also understood that there was a relationship between the facts that our school was overcrowded and in poor repair, and that our classes were large and lacked basic educational resources, on the one hand, and the fact that it was a school for students of color, largely immigrant and poor, in an underfunded urban school district, on the other. Yet having defined away the problem of de facto racial segregation, the Thernstroms can blithely assert that there is no “harm” in such racial “imbalance.” And having ignored the role that school desegregation, especially in the South, played in diminishing the achievement gap from 1975 through the late 1980s, they can then assert that racial integration would have no positive effect.

What makes the Thernstroms’ dismissal of the separate and unequal character of American education so galling is their contention, based on one model teacher and a couple of model schools, that there is nothing in the achievement gap that high standards, high-stakes tests and high expectations can’t solve, nothing that a “no excuses”

message won’t address.

Their model educator is Rafe Esquith, a teacher who has written eloquently about his work in an inner-city Los Angeles school in *There Are No Shortcuts*. As it happens, I know Rafe, and I have visited his classroom: he and I met in 1992, at the American Teacher Awards, when we were both honored—he as the elementary school teacher of the year, I as the social studies teacher of the year. There is no question that the work Rafe does, like the work of thousands of similarly dedicated teachers of inner-city students across the United States, demonstrates that inner-city kids working with selfless, loving, and skilled teachers are capable of great things, even under the most trying and difficult conditions.

But it is an insult to Rafe and to other dedicated teachers to suggest, as the Thernstroms do, that their work could be easily replicated on a mass scale. When you read Rafe’s account of his work (and if you buy any book in this review, buy Rafe’s, because all of the author’s royalties will be spent on an inner-city classroom), you discover a teacher who begins his work with students at 6 A.M., works with those students straight until 5 P.M., and then goes out on second jobs, in order to finance various class trips and out-of-school events. He recounts how an exhausting schedule that allowed barely three or four hours of sleep a night landed him in a hospital emergency room, vomiting blood, before he learned how to put limits on what he would try to do for his students. He and teachers like him are authentic heroes precisely because they do what ordinary women and men are not willing to do, because they sacrifice in ways that no society, let alone the richest society in the history of the world, has a right to ask teachers to sacrifice. Teachers like Rafe compensate for what American society and government fail to provide. Facing schools that are separate and unequal, these teachers bring a measure of unity and equality, through incredible selflessness and sheer dint of effort.

If my words are riven with passion here, it is because I have lived this reality. For ten years, with two colleagues, I prepared classes of students to participate in the national “We The People” competition on American constitu-

tional principles and citizenship; in each of those years, they won the New York City championship; in four of those years, they won the New York State championship; twice, they ranked fourth in the entire nation. That record of success, in which my students regularly defeated prestigious schools from the wealthiest school districts in the state and nation, was made possible only by work before and after the regular school day, by our giving up vacation days and weekends, by our organizing within the community to find lawyers, judges, and law school professors to work with the students. And while teachers from private schools and wealthy school districts had every possible support in their work with their classes, I had to go hat in hand to raise the tens of thousands of dollars required for my students to participate in the multi-day national competition.

The Thernstroms' commendation of Rafe Esquith echoes a new conservative ethos, in which civic virtue is reserved for the poor and working class, while the wealthy engage in ostentatious self-indulgence. American soldiers

can be sent to fight and die in Iraq, but the wealthy can not even be asked to pay their fair share of taxes to support the war effort. And teachers can be called upon single-handedly to undo the negative effects of poverty and inadequate schooling, but they should not expect the tools necessary to do that job.

The struggle for racial justice in American education went seriously awry when the battle to desegregate public schools was abandoned. As important as efforts to gain financial equity in schooling are, they can not be the sole front of the struggle for equality. If progressive reform efforts are to regain the political initiative in education, progressives must find a way to put the question of how to replace separate and unequal schooling with quality, integrated schooling for all on the America political agenda once again. ●

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Recent Books by *Dissent* Editors

Dissent does not review books by its editors, but we do want our readers to be aware of them. Listed below are recent books by several editors.

PAUL BERMAN, *Terror and Liberalism* (W. W. Norton and Company, 2003).

JEAN L. COHEN, *Regulating Intimacy: A New Legal Paradigm* (Princeton Univ. Press, 2002).

TODD GITLIN, *Letters to a Young Activist* (Basic Books, 2003).

Media Unlimited (Holt, 2003, paper).

"Varieties of Patriotic Experience," contribution to George Packer, ed., *The Fight is For Democracy* (HarperCollins, 2003)

JEFFREY C. ISAAC, *The Poverty of Progressivism: The Future of American Democracy in a Time of Liberal Decline* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2003 paper).

MICHAEL KAZIN, *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s*, co-authored with Maurice Isserman (Oxford University Press, 2nd ed., 2003).

WILLIAM KORNBLUM (illustrated by Oliver Williams), *At Sea in the City: New York from the Water's Edge* (Algonquin Books, 2002).

BRIAN MORTON, *A Window Across the River* (Harcourt, 2003)

GEORGE PACKER, ed., *The Fight Is for Democracy : Winning the War of Ideas in America and the World* (Perennial, 2004).

JAMES B. RULE, Debra Gimlin, and Sylvia Sievers, *Computing in Organizations: Myth and Experience* (Transaction Publications, 2002).

MICHAEL WALZER, with co-editors, *The Jewish Political Tradition, vol. 2, Membership* (Yale University Press, 2003).

From Protest to . . .

David Glenn

LOST PROPHET:

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF BAYARD RUSTIN

by John D'Emilio

The Free Press, 2003 576 pp \$35

TIME ON TWO CROSSES: THE COLLECTED

WRITINGS OF BAYARD RUSTIN

Devon W. Carbado and Donald Wiese, eds.

Cleis Press, 2003 355 pp \$16.95

BAYARD RUSTIN was a stubborn man, and for most of his life that stubbornness served him beautifully. He shrugged off racial stigma during his early-1930s high school years in West Chester, Pennsylvania, where he faced the usual lunatic cruelties (he was never allowed to enter the home of his white best friend). In adulthood he maintained his political commitments despite two and a half years in federal penitentiaries for draft resistance during the Second World War; twenty-two days on a chain gang in North Carolina following a 1947 campaign against bus segregation; and a nationally publicized 1953 arrest for having sex with two men on a Pasadena roadside.

A more fragile person might easily have fallen into despair after the Pasadena arrest. Rustin was then forty years old, a socialist, an anticommunist, and a pacifist of a radical Christian stripe—which meant, by definition, that he found most of the American left (to say nothing of American society as a whole) to be deeply complicit in evil. And now even his own tiny niche, the circle of left-wing pacifists clustered around A.J. Muste and the Fellowship of Reconciliation, rejected him. The FOR announced Rustin's departure from its staff in a press release that mournfully referred to his "problem."

At that point it must have been tempting for Rustin to withdraw from political life, to immerse himself entirely in the Manhattan bohemia where he already had many friends. He could probably have found a job at one of the antique shops he frequented in Greenwich Village, which could hardly have paid less than his old staff position at FOR. He could have spent his 1950s evenings in MacDougal Street coffee shops, playing chess and expostulating about the insanity of the arms race, adding that he used to be an activist, once, and still would be, if only there were a corner of the left that despised Soviet tyranny and hated U.S. militarism *and* tolerated sexual difference.

But that sort of withdrawal was not in Rustin's nature. By the end of 1953 he found a new position at the War Resisters League, a secular cousin of FOR. (Through the League he eventually developed deep friendships with Michael Harrington and other members of the Shachtmanite-socialist milieu.) In 1956, he went to Montgomery to assist in the city's bus boycott. There he met Martin Luther King, Jr., and the two men had long conversations about how to apply Gandhian and Quaker principles of nonviolence to the civil rights struggle. That relationship reached its apogee in 1963, when Rustin, more than any other single individual, organized the Washington march at which King delivered the "I have a dream" speech. No longer a marginal figure in a marginal movement, Rustin was suddenly on the cover of *Life*. For a few years, he and his allies brilliantly yoked together the intense personal ethic of nonviolent direct action and the impure pragmatic work of building mass political coalitions.

Then things fell apart. During the LBJ years, Rustin, like many other people in Max Shachtman's orbit, not unreasonably came to believe that a major political realignment was within the left's grasp. Full-blown social democracy was just over the horizon, if only a

labor-civil rights coalition could be stitched together within the Democratic Party. Until his death in 1987, Rustin devoted his prodigious energies to realizing that vision—and here his stubbornness served him less well. His campaigns and essays from 1966 onward had an admirable sobriety; he kept thinking pragmatically at a time when many leftists gave themselves over to posturing and rage. But Rustin's invocations of the labor-civil rights-Democratic Party recipe quickly became rote, formulaic, and weirdly disconnected from the actual unfolding of history. Neither second-wave feminism nor recession nor the election of Richard Nixon seemed to affect his imagined playbook for the left. There was also the small matter of the Vietnam War: After 1965, Rustin was appallingly absent from the struggle to end American carpet-bombing and chemical warfare. The record of his huge courage and huge compromises makes uncomfortable reading.

ONE OF THE MANY virtues of *Lost Prophet*, John D'Emilio's excellent new biography of Rustin, is that it preserves a vivid sense of the day-to-day reality of Rustin's activist work. His first exposure to political life came during his West Chester childhood; his grandparents, who were prominent members of the town's small African American community, occasionally hosted W.E.B. Du Bois and other traveling lecturers. His political commitments deepened during his years at Cheyney State Teachers College, a Quaker-founded institution, where he joined several antiwar campaigns.

In 1937, one year short of graduation, Rustin left Cheyney State under circumstances that remain unclear. According to one account, he was caught making love with a young man from a prominent white family. D'Emilio quotes a friend of Rustin who heard this story years after the fact: "I forget what happened to Bayard, but it was very very unpleasant. Nothing happened to the white guy." Rustin left town, moved in with an aunt in Harlem, and, through the Works Progress Administration, found a job as a teacher of English to the foreign born.

Rustin's ambition was to become a profes-

sional singer—he spent several months as a chorus member in *John Henry*, a musical starring Paul Robeson—but he continued to devote many hours to political work. He passed through both the Young Communist League and the American Friends Service Committee, maintaining networks he had first developed while at Cheyney State. In June 1941, when the Communist Party abandoned its antiwar position, Rustin was horrified, and he thereafter sustained a lifelong disgust with the Soviet project. (D'Emilio suggests that Rustin sometimes later exaggerated the extent of his involvement with the Young Communist League, and notes that before the break Rustin had already developed a friendship with the staunchly anticommunist A. Philip Randolph. In any case, the basic contours of the story are clear.)

In the summer of 1941, Rustin traveled to Puerto Rico on a project organized by the AFSC. Among other tasks, he was asked to assess the conditions of conscientious objectors on the island. When he returned to New York, he found that his work had impressed A.J. Muste, the recently appointed head of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. He signed on as one of FOR's youth secretaries, and he remained there until the Pasadena disaster.

Muste, whose background was in the socialist movement, hoped to import into FOR the direct-action techniques pioneered by Gandhi's anticolonialist campaigns. (The Fellowship's "very comfortable middle-class" board of directors sometimes resisted such moves.) Rustin's particular mission was to travel the country checking on the work camps established for conscientious objectors; he was enraged to discover that in the south such camps were racially segregated. On one journey in 1942, he spontaneously decided to put Gandhian principles into practice. As he boarded a bus in Louisville, a small white child grabbed his tie; the child's mother slapped the hand away, saying, "Don't touch a nigger." After hearing that insult, Rustin realized that he could not in good faith sit in the bus's Jim Crow section. ("I vowed then and there that I was never going through the south again without either being arrested or thrown off the bus or protesting.") He took a seat up front, in the

whites-only section.

Rustin's account of his arrest that day, originally written for FOR's newsletter and reprinted in the new anthology *Time on Two Crosses*, has a bracing directness.

I was put into the back seat of the police car, between two policemen. Two others sat in front. During the thirteen-mile ride to town they called me every conceivable name and said anything they could think of to incite me to violence. I found that I was shaking with nervous strain, and to give myself something to do, I took out a piece of paper and a pencil, and began to write from memory one of Paul's letters.

THE ARREST MARKED the beginning of Rustin's long struggle to disrupt the everyday rituals of racism. In another 1942 essay, Rustin used arguments that foreshadowed King's language of two decades later:

Nonviolence as a method has within it the demand for terrible sacrifice and long suffering, but, as Gandhi has said, "freedom does not drop from the sky" . . . [T]here are those who question the use of nonviolent direct action by Negroes in protesting discrimination, on the grounds that this method will rekindle hitherto dormant racial feeling. But we must remember that too often conflict is already at hand and that there is hence a greater danger: the inevitable use of force by persons embittered by injustice and unprepared for nonviolence. It is a cause for shame that millions of people continue to live under conditions of injustice while we make no effective effort to remedy the situation.

When the draft board came calling, Rustin refused to comply with the government's program of work camps for conscientious objectors, and instead did hard time in two federal prisons. ("The Conscription Act denies brotherhood," he told the board.) While in jail, he was punished for trading sexual favors—an incident that brought him into his first serious conflict with Muste.

Between his 1946 release and his 1953 "morals" arrest, Rustin worked on dozens of low-profile, now-forgotten campaigns: peace marches, vigils at weapons sites, challenges to segregated interstate buses. His relentless work

in campaigns that were marginal even on the left's terms paid huge dividends a decade later: When it came time to construct the 1963 March on Washington, Rustin was one of the few people in the country with the organizing ability to pull off the feat. Among the thousand tasks, Rustin later told an interviewer, was to decide "how many blankets we would need for the people who were coming in early . . . how many doctors, how many first aid stations, what people should bring with them to eat in their lunches . . . We had, of course, to have fantastic planning of all the parking lots for the thousands of buses and automobiles."

Rustin accrued those skills because he was willing to take risks even during the grimmest years of the early 1950s, when Joseph McCarthy and John Foster Dulles were in the saddle, and most of the organized left was timid or Stalinist or both. (There is a lesson here for democratic leftists today who take one look at the braying sectarians who lead today's marches and decide to stay home and do nothing at all.) Muste, Rustin, and their small group of pacifists persisted with their work and, almost accidentally, pioneered the techniques that built the mass civil rights movement.

HOW SHOULD we understand the weakening of Rustin's voice after 1965, when he became the founding director of the labor-funded A. Philip Randolph Institute? One place to begin is the Montgomery bus boycott of 1956, when Rustin first encountered a truly mass movement. Here was the campaign he had been dreaming of for decades—a nonviolent action that (in the words of a memo from Rustin to King) involved "all strata of society" and "did not rely exclusively on a handful of leaders." In Rustin's eyes, this was a thrilling window thrown open by history, and it was important to accomplish as much as possible before that window closed. D'Emilio writes, "Especially after Montgomery, Rustin rebelled, sometimes inwardly and sometimes openly, against the perfectionist outlook of a peace movement whose moral absolutism kept it pure but marginal."

Rustin's growing sense of pragmatism helped him to accomplish great things between 1956 and 1963. He advised in the creation of

the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and he helped bring together the alphabet soup of organizations (CORE, SNCC, the UAW, and the NAACP) that sponsored the March on Washington. He persisted in this work despite periodic whispering campaigns (some of which were helped along by FBI agents) about his gay identity and his alleged unfitness to serve the civil rights movement.

Rustin's pragmatism took a difficult turn after the 1963 March on Washington. In tandem with Randolph, Harrington, and other democratic socialists, Rustin argued that federal civil rights legislation might not mean much if the labor market kept most African Americans in poverty. "What Congress and the courts give, the market place could take away," he wrote in a memo to the planners of Johnson's White House Conference on race. He urged civil rights organizations to deepen their alliances with labor and to fight for full employment and a higher minimum wage. "This country must dig deep and be prepared to make revolutionary change in its economic and social life," he said in a mid-1960s speech. "And nothing short of that."

BUT IF HIS RHETORIC and programmatic commitments remained on the left, Rustin's strategic instincts drifted rightward. In a 1964 essay in *Commentary*, he suggested that nonviolent direct action would not be relevant to the fight for full employment and social insurance:

A handful of Negroes, acting alone, could integrate a lunch counter by strategically locating their bodies so as *directly* to interrupt the operation of the proprietor's will; their numbers were relatively unimportant. In politics, however, such a confrontation is difficult because the interests involved are merely *represented*. . . . [I]n arriving at a political decision, numbers and organizations are crucial. . . . We need allies. The future of the Negro struggle depends on whether the contradictions of this society can be resolved by a coalition of progressive forces which becomes the *effective* political majority in the United States.

There is undeniable truth to that argument. Not every campaign offers the moral clarity or the personal immediacy of the Woolworth sit-

ins. What one does with that insight, however, is not obvious. There are dozens of potential strategic permutations that might conceivably lead to a successful social democratic coalition. (Should nonviolent direct action have *no* role or simply a reduced role? Should the coalition fight relentlessly for ultimate goals like national health insurance or trim its sails as political conditions warrant? And so on.) The path Rustin chose, clinging tightly to a relatively conservative trade union leadership, ran into serious trouble very quickly. So did the more left-wing model later pursued by Harrington's Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee and the Democratic Socialists of America.

As the 1960s progressed, Rustin occasionally worked on street protests (including an awkward stint with the Poor People's Campaign of 1968), but worked primarily on building a new left-wing establishment: making sure that labor and civil rights groups spoke to one another and that they had access to Congress and the White House. (Rustin helped to craft the Randolph Institute's powerful get-out-the-vote apparatus, which plays a major role in certain states to this day.) By the mid-1970s, D'Emilio notes, Rustin was enough of a Washington player that "he was on a first-name basis with individuals such as Donald Rumsfeld, President Ford's secretary of defense."

As the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and Students for a Democratic Society abandoned nonviolence and turned toward Maoism and cultural politics, Rustin could only exhort from the sidelines. In an interview that appeared in *Dissent* in 1968, he again urged civil rights leaders to fight for jobs and the redistribution of wealth. "Many of them are much more concerned with debating whether you should be called Negro, Afro-American, or black; and many of the organizations, including CORE and SNCC, are encouraging that kind of debate as against doing the real job."

In the decade after World War II, in an incredibly inhospitable environment, Rustin had helped to create a living praxis that embodied his politics. In the late 1960s, in a different kind of inhospitable environment, Rustin failed to create a politics that matched his vision, and instead did the honest, tepid work of left-lib-

eral inside-the-Beltway coalition-building. After 1965, by and large, he passively waited for the emergence of the correct kind of street mobilizations—which never did emerge—to complement his coalition work. There's no great shame in that. He was moving into late middle age, and what he did in the 1950s is miracle enough for one lifetime.

EXCEPT: RUSTIN's absence from the later stages of the movement against the Vietnam War is astonishing. This was not only a moral error but also suggests that he misread the feasibility of the particular Democratic coalition he yearned for.

In June 1965, Rustin spoke to seventeen thousand people at an antiwar rally in Madison Square Garden. He urged the crowd to "take their crusade to the streets." Late that night he spoke at another rally in front of the United Nations. But that year the war issue was already causing him trouble. The Randolph Institute was promoting a full-employment "Freedom Budget" drafted with Harrington's consultation. The pamphlet's summary declared that the Budget "neither endorses nor condemns present military policies"—and nothing in its structure required money to be diverted from the war effort. The project therefore faced a harsh reception from the very people who should have been its central audience. Officials of CORE rejected the premise "that we can afford both guns and butter." Michael Kazin, then an undergraduate SDS activist at Harvard, scorned the Freedom Budget: "They're willing to keep all the defense money intact just so they can keep George Meany happy."

In later years, as the napalm continued to drop, D'Emilio writes, "Rustin was nowhere to be found in the largest antiwar movement in the history of the United States."

Did Rustin regretfully decide that he had no time for antiwar work, that his proper role now was to concentrate on civil rights and economic justice? He suggested as much in the 1967 essay "Guns, Bread, and Butter." Or did he, like others in Shachtman's circle in the late 1960s, sincerely come to believe that the struggle against Leninist tyranny justified the Vietnam War and all that came with it? There's

no evidence for that hypothesis. Rustin always quietly maintained that he opposed the war, although after 1965 he usually argued against it only on pragmatic grounds, saying that the right wing was using the war "as an excuse to cut back on the war on poverty and the struggle against racism." (This was the rough equivalent of the mealy-mouthed argument of 1950s liberals, to the effect that segregation had to end because it sullied the United States' image in the worldwide struggle against communism. In other words, it was true, but it comfortably evaded the central moral realities. The Rustin of the 1950s surely had contempt for such evasions.)

Or were Rustin's choices, as Kazin suggested, driven by a narrow desire to keep his job and to keep the AFL-CIO within his imagined social democratic coalition? That has been the dominant interpretation over the years; in 1965, Rustin's old friend Staughton Lynd castigated him as a "labor lieutenant of capitalism." D'Emilio convincingly argues, however, that matters were not so simple. Rustin was willing to condemn the Johnson administration's domestic policies in fiery terms, and he also took on racist practices within the building trades—so he does not seem to have been all that frightened of making waves within his coalition.

It is irresistible to speculate what might have happened if Rustin had wound up on the staff of the SCLC rather than at the Randolph Institute. King offered him a job there in early 1964, and Rustin planned to accept—but the process was short-circuited by a disgusting FBI maneuver:

On February 4. . . the agent listening on Rustin's line recorded a call from Muste asking if Rustin was going to the Soviet consulate that afternoon. When Rustin said yes, the agent immediately reported the information to Donald Roney, head of the New York office, who contacted national headquarters. By midafternoon, the FBI's assistant director was able to let the New York office know that he had "just given this information to Mr. _____ of the New York Journal American newspaper, who said he would have a photographer and reporter at the scene to get a picture of Rustin entering the Soviet UN Mission and would give

the matter good publicity.”

Rustin joined Muste that day to meet with a “peace delegation” from Eastern Europe. The notion that Rustin would have gone into such a meeting with starry-eyed naïveté about Soviet behavior is absurd. (Three years earlier, when he helped to organize a pro-disarmament march across Europe, Rustin had insisted that there be no alliances with phony official East European “peace” groups.) But all such nuances were lost in the press melee that followed. Rustin was on the front page of the next day’s *Daily News*, which lambasted him for “consorting with the Soviets.” King’s circle decided once again that Rustin was a political liability, and the job offer was withdrawn.

Is it possible that at SCLC, Rustin would have been able to nurture a healthier variant

of his coalition politics, one that combined Washington networking with ongoing street mobilizations? Would he have been able to speak more plainly about Vietnam, as King began to do the year before his murder? Rustin’s project probably would have been shipwrecked by one thing or another in any case: it’s hard to imagine a political vehicle that could have encompassed both George Meany, who was drifting toward Nixon, and Stokely Carmichael, who had taken on an insane brand of third worldist Leninism. But the possibilities are worth an afternoon of hard thought. Even in 2004, there is a social democratic politics waiting to be built. ●

DAVID GLENN has written for the *Nation*, *Lingua Franca*, and the *New York Times Book Review*.

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Strategy for Success?

Ken Brociner

**CHANGING THE POWERS THAT BE, HOW
THE LEFT CAN STOP LOSING AND WIN**

by G. William Domhoff

Rowman and Littlefield, 2003 160 pp \$23.95

READING G. WILLIAM DOMHOFF's latest book, *Changing the Powers That Be, How the Left Can Stop Losing and Win* was a dizzying experience. In this slim and highly readable discussion about how leftists can finally get their act together, Domhoff bounces between the extremely perceptive and the way-off-base. Just when you think he may have his finger on what makes the left tick, he levels a criticism so wide of the mark that the reader wonders if the author has spent the last two decades living in a time warp. Nevertheless, the book contains enough of value to warrant wider attention than it has received.

Two themes run through each chapter. They are arguments about why the left has so consistently failed to achieve its historic goal of "changing the powers that be" and what the left should do from here on out.

Domhoff begins his discussion of what the left should be doing with a hypothetical account of what Ralph Nader's campaign of 2000 might have looked like had Nader and the Greens been thinking clearly. In this scenario, Nader would have run a vigorous campaign in the Democratic primaries, all the while channeling the grassroots energy he was generating into the formation of locally based Egalitarian Democratic Clubs (EDCs). When he realized that Al Gore would be the Democratic nominee, Nader would have endorsed him enthusiastically, thus gaining a visible role at the Democratic convention and, more important, helping to ensure Bush's defeat.

The nationwide network of EDCs would then form "the basis for the future takeover of the party in the same way liberals had taken over the California state party with their democratic clubs in the 1950s."

Underlying his views on electoral strategy is Domhoff's unorthodox (on the left, at least) claim that "it is not accurate to assert that the two parties are becoming more and more similar. They actually have become increasingly different over the past thirty-five years." Barney Frank makes a similar argument, and it seems to me that the left needs to take a much more open-minded, empirically based look at this question.

From his analysis of the disastrous impact of the Nader campaign, Domhoff argues that "egalitarians" (his term for left-liberals/progressives) must work within the Democratic Party, in large measure, to avoid precisely what happened in the last presidential election. He urges "egalitarians" to once and for all stop threatening to support third party efforts—and instead, to join a permanent united front with mainstream Democrats. But this doesn't mean merging with or blending into the Democratic Party. Instead, he asks us to carry out his imaginary Nader scenario and form locally based EDCs all over the country. His reasoning here is rooted in both political strategy and sociological analysis. And on both scores, Domhoff displays a deft touch.

Strategically, he calls upon progressives, operating out of EDCs, to campaign in Democratic primaries for local, statewide, and national office. As more and more progressive Democrats win public office, he argues, both the Democratic Party and the nation as a whole will gradually move in a leftward direction.

At the same time, he places three key conditions on any such efforts. First, "egalitarian" candidates must emerge from and be accountable to the EDCs. Second, not only should the

tone of any insurgent primary campaigns be civil, but more fundamentally, nothing should be said or done that could play into the hands of the Republican Party. Third, “egalitarians” should make it clear from the outset that, should they lose in the primary, they will wholeheartedly unite with the Democratic victor and work like hell to prevent Republican victories.

Domhoff’s sociological analysis of the potential appeal of EDCs is a significant contribution to the effort to strategically guide the kind of political idealism that all too often degenerates into dogmatic (and self-defeating) political purism. And given that Domhoff is one of the most influential political sociologists of the last forty years, as well as the author of the 1967 classic *Who Rules America?*, progressives would be well advised to take a close look at what he has to say: “The moral outrage that leads in the direction of third parties is understandable and admirable in the face of huge inequalities and unnecessary suffering,” and although this outrage “generates a desire for a distinctive social identity and a space to call one’s own . . . there are better ways to express it and at the same time be more effective in the political arena.”

IN CONTRAST to his proposals about what the left *should* be doing, Domhoff’s critique of what the left *has* been doing, although it contains important kernels of truth, is a wild exaggeration. He makes the absurd claim that “Criticism of *any* [emphasis added] aspect of Marxism is second only to third parties as a source of great emotion and division among leftists.” At another point, he asserts that “much of the egalitarian analysis is unappealing to most people—third parties, centrally planned economies, violent tactics, a tendency to rely on charismatic leaders, uncritical admiration of foreign revolutions, and a disdain for organized religion.”

Space limitations prevent me from addressing these arguments in detail, but I have no doubt that any objective poll on these mat-

ters would clearly indicate that the number of leftists/progressives who support *any* of these views represents a small minority of all those who identify with the left.

Perhaps the strangest aspect of Domhoff’s critique of the contemporary left is his charge that our stubborn adherence to centrally planned economies is at the heart of our continuing failure to attract more widespread public support. As he puts it, “Why is it so hard for many activists to let go of the unworkable idea of central planning as the key to a more egalitarian social system?” Two pages later, he makes an argument that most of us already accept: “for our purposes, markets can be reconstructed to make it possible to plan for a more egalitarian economic future. It turns out that it is possible for strong governments to use the market system for planning.”

What a novel idea. It is as if the author has never heard of European social democracy nor of the many left-wing variants of it that have been widely discussed on this side of the Atlantic.

Throughout, Domhoff contends that he is proposing “a dynamic new package” and a “whole new approach” for the American left. In fact, he is proposing no such thing. Despite what he may believe, there are countless others who have been making many of the same arguments for quite some time now. However, the one element of Domhoff’s “package” that does represent somewhat of a “new approach” (although the late Michael Harrington and others have argued for it in these pages), is his “party within a party” proposal for creating autonomous structures within the Democratic Party. Original or not, Domhoff’s overall advice about what the left should be doing is quite sound. And that it is why his book—despite its many flaws—has the potential to generate a much needed debate about how we can finally stop losing and start winning. ●

KEN BROCIER frequently writes about strategies for the left.

For those socialists who have experienced in their bones the meaning of our century, the time has not yet come, I believe, to cast off its burdens. Such a time may come. Meanwhile, we hope to serve as a link to those friends of tomorrow who will have so completely absorbed the lessons of our age that they will not need to rehearse them. Whatever the fate of socialism, the yearning for a better mode of life which found expression in its thought and its struggle will reappear. Of that I am absolutely certain.

—IRVING HOWE (1985)

Nicholas Howe and Georgina Kleege

Nina Howe, Bill Bukowski
Ana and Nick Howe-Bukowski

For New Generations of Dissent



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and Walzer-Goldfeld Families

*In tribute
to the staff(s) of
Dissent magazine
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Mitchell Cohen, Co-editor

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Stanley Plastrik, Simone Plastrik,
and so many others.**

Deborah Willen Meier

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Let us hope that *Dissent*
will have withered away on
its 100th Anniversary

(i.e., that the status quo converges with the
views of the *Dissent* community)

—•—
Daniel A. Bell



Emanuel Geltman

1914-1995

A Founding Editor of Dissent

FRANCES A. SOSNOFF

CONGRATULATIONS TO DISSENT AT 50



We do well to remember. DISSENT will remember Irving Howe, Lewis Coser, and the many others who have made the journal essential

There are others who should be remembered, including some thank you still with us:

Debbie Meier	Jack Stuart	Bernie Bolitzer	Fred Meier
Bayard Rustin		Bogdan Denitch	Don Chenoweth
Anne Lipow	Milton Davis	Jim Gallagher	Art Lipow
	and of course	Mike Harrington	

We do well to look forward. Long life to DISSENT (and to journals and writers who dissent from it), and to democratic socialist politics and organizations. Our time will come if we work for it.

Peter Graham, December, 2003

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I recall the thrill of the first issue, which I read when teaching in London in 1954: so the United States (or at least New York) was capable of redemption after all! My British and European friends responded in the same way. I also recall, with gratitude, the integrity and intelligence of Lewis Coser and Irving Howe, the passion and wit of Michael Harrington, the devotion of those like Simone Plastrik who labored so hard at the mundane tasks of producing the journal. The late sainted Dwight Macdonald laughed at *Dissent's* academic connections and termed its editors and contributors "Professors of Revolution." He did, however, give *Dissent* the text that the CIA's kept intellectuals would not publish in their journal, *Encounter*. Better "Professors of Revolution" than apologists for power. A good lesson for the next fifty years.

NORMAN BIRNBAUM

In memory of
Arnold Kaufman
and all the
founding
Dissenters.

Keep it going.

ELIZABETH KAUFMAN

GREETINGS TO *DISSENT*

*And thanks to my teachers,
mentors and friends from
Queens College:*

Ray Franklin
Peter Manicas
Lennie Markovitz
Mike Krasner
Mike Wreszin
Frank Warren
Sol Resnick
Burt Zweibach
And Michael Harrington

*who bear no responsibility for my
"deviations," but much credit for
whatever good sense of mine
may grace the pages of this
magazine from time to time*

JEFF ISAAC
Bloomington, Indiana

We Remember
With Great Love
Irving Howe
and
**Michael
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Jewel and Bernard Bellush

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Danny Kazin
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In memory of two
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for justice:

**Rose Laub Coser
and
Lewis Coser**

CYNTHIA FUCHS EPSTEIN

**"Resist much,
obey little."**

—*Walt Whitman*

JOHN PATRICK DIGGINS

IN LOVING
MEMORY OF
**STANLEY &
SIMONE PLASTRIK
AND THEIR FRIENDS
ANNA AND AJIT
MUKHERJI**

KATHERINE FLANDERS MUKHERJI
AND RAJAT MUKHERJI

In honor of
Irving Howe,
whose
presence in
the world
made a
difference to
many of us.

ARIEN MACK

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BETTER
WORLD
REQUIRES
DISSENT**

RASHI FEIN

**We have read
Dissent for the fifty
years of its
existence.**

**In fond memory of
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Manny Geltman,
and Stanley Plastrik**

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In memory of
I. MILTON SACKS,
a member of the original
editorial board who showed me
a copy of the first issue hot off
the press. He was a vehement
critic and contentious socialist
to the end.

MORTON TENZER

In memory of
Michael Harrington
and
Irving Howe

JOSEPH M. SCHWARTZ

Here's to 50
more years of
Dissent!

ZELDA BRONSTEIN

Here's to
DISSENT!

MICHAEL W. DOYLE
AND
AMY GUTMANN

Congratulations
on the first 50,
Dissent.

From your grateful
contributor and editor,
GEORGE PACKER

DANIELE ARCHIBUGI, a friend from
Rome, recommends this sentence
by Benjamin Franklin:

**"Be at war with your vices, at
peace with your neighbors, and
let every new year find you a
better man."**

With very best wishes and good
luck for the next half a century.

Happy Anniversary on *Dissent's* 50th Birthyear

*In Memory of Several
African-American Socialist Adherents*

W.E.B. Du Bois
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In memory of
Labor Action
and the comrades who helped guide
my way to democratic socialism.

H. BRAND

In memory of Jock Yablonski, miner; Peter
Panto, longshoreman; John Acropolis,
teamster; Lloyd Green, painter; Dow
Wilson, painter — Who died in the battle
for decent and democratic unionism.

HERMAN BENSON

Dissent

It's so American...

**Happy Anniversary,
Dissent!**

SEYLA BENHABIB AND JAMES A. SLEEPER

In honor and admiration of *Dissent's*
founding editor, Irving, and Michael,
with gratitude from one who tries to
learn from their example.

Mazel Tov, from ERIC ALTERMAN

**Congratulations to *Dissent* for 50
years of contributions to the cause
of social justice!**

STEPHEN E. APPELL, Brooklyn, NY

**Remembering Comrade Irving Howe,
fellow left democratic socialist
habitué of the CCNY alcoves.**

ISRAEL KUGLER, YPSL Organizer,
CCNY Class of 1938

**Best wishes for
the next fifty years.**

HENRIETTA BACKER

I offer this small gift in Michael
Harrington's memory. May you
maintain his allegiance to the left
wing of the possible and to his dream
of a better world.

PETER CONNOLLY

Keep up the good work!

GLORIA AND HERB LEIDERMAN

***Dissent* magazine is a great source of inspiration and a terrific forum for courageous, principled, fair, and liberal ideas without ideology. Congratulations on 50 years of thoughtful contributions to the political discourse.**

DIETER DETTKE
*Executive Director, Friedrich Ebert
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Greetings on your 50th anniversary! May you pursue your mission of critical analysis and thoughtful *Dissent* for another 50 years — at least — and may you inspire many others.

STANLEY HOFFMANN

RUDOLPH M. LAPP

Maxine Phillips's quiet work behind the scenes makes *Dissent* happen at the magazine and at large.

MARK FINKEL
West Hempstead, New York

In memory of George Rawick, courageous scholar and activist, who schlepped volume one issues at the University of Wisconsin. He is an inspiration to those who embraced him as friend.

GERD KORMAN

Congratulations and thanks for fifty years of publication. Keep up the excellent work, it has never been needed more than now.

VIC BURTON, Kansas City

**Congratulations to *Dissent*
And to honor Joanne Barkan**
for her years of commitment and service as a writer and member of the editorial board.

MRS. HERBERT FRIEDMAN

Toward the next 50 years.

JOANNE AND NORMAN MILLER

**Congratulations to *Dissent*
on its 50th Anniversary.
You are a welcome voice
from the left.**

JOHN W. MORRIS

I admire what you offer us.

MAXINE GREENE

**GARY GERSTLE
AND
ELIZABETH LUNBECK**

Anonymous

**For fifty years we have
appreciated *Dissent*. We look
forward to fifty more.**

Solidarity,
JOE AND DOTTIE GUTENKAUF

**In memory of
Dr. Morris Levinson,
a lifelong dissenter.**

SHIRLEY LEVINSON

**Congratulations for surviving intact the
illiberal agendas of the past 50 years
and for scrutinizing the fantasies and
machinations of some on the left.**

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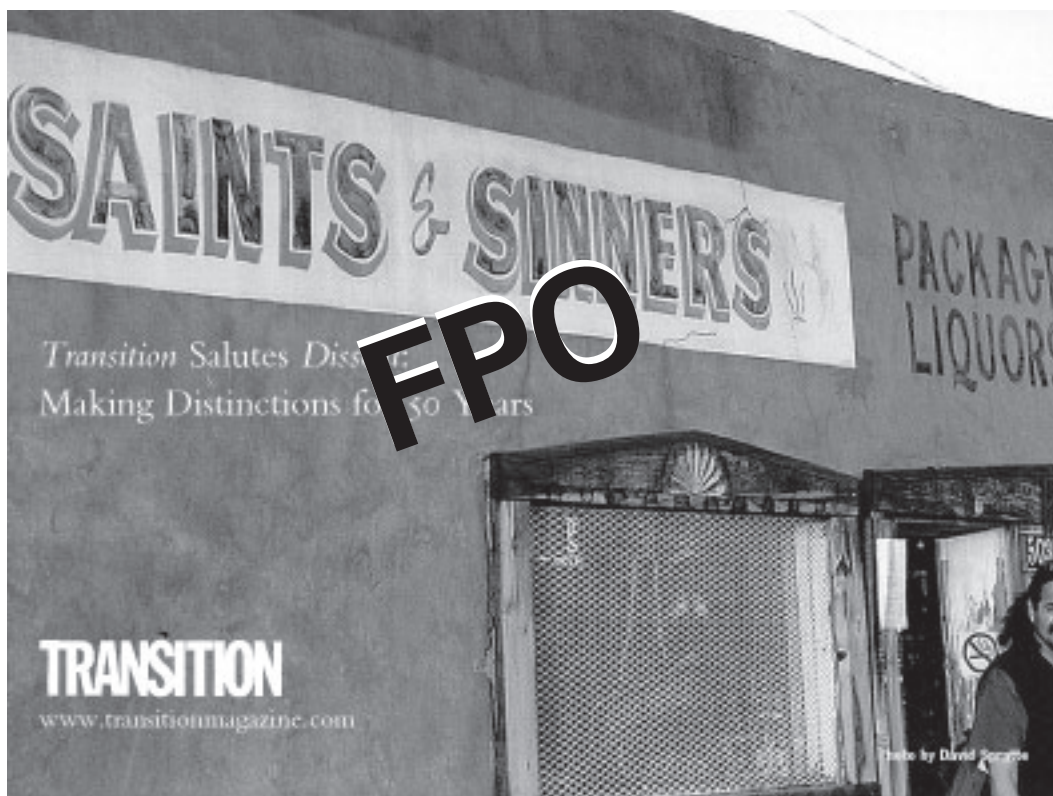
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Congratulations to *DISSENT* on its 50th anniversary

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Marc Sadoun
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Raisons Politiques
Presses de Sciences-Po
199 Bd Saint-Germain
Paris, France, 75007

Dear Friends at *Dissent*,

I still recall my emotion at my first meeting with Irving Howe. It was 1989, it was the beginning of a cooperation between the Italian magazine that then existed only in my mind (*Reset* came to life in '93) and the magazine of Michael Walzer, Mitchell Cohen, Joanne Barkan, and many other friends from the United States who looked after the troubles of the European left. I discovered the Democratic Socialists of America and was proud to put their names and their ideas in the pages of the Italian press of the left. We soon realized we had books and authors in common, from Rosselli to Chiaromonte, not to mention many we can still read in *Dissent*, as well as a set of principles that — if you'll allow me — I'd put under the label of social-liberalism. We started to meet regularly for some years in the 1990s. Today, I think we should revive that good habit, together with its goal of drawing American and European intellectuals, social-liberals of Europe and America, closer together. It seems to me an urgently needed task.

Un milione di Auguri / With very best wishes,

GIANCARLO BOSETTI
Editor-in-chief, *Reset*, Rome

Images of Socialism

Lewis Coser and Irving Howe

“GOD,” SAID TOLSTOY, “is the name of my desire.” This remarkable sentence could haunt one a lifetime, it reverberates in so many directions. Tolstoy may have intended partial assent to the idea that, life being insupportable without some straining toward “transcendence,” a belief in God is a psychological necessity. But he must also have wanted to turn this rationalist criticism into a definition of his faith. He must have meant that precisely because his holiest desires met in the vision of God he was enabled to cope with the quite unholy realities of human existence. That God should be seen as the symbolic objectification of his desire thus became both a glorification of God and a strengthening of man, a stake in the future and a radical criticism of the present.

Without sanctioning the facile identification that is frequently made between religion and socialist politics, we should like to twist Tolstoy’s remark to our own ends: *socialism is the name of our desire*. And not merely in the sense that it is a vision which, for many people throughout the world, provides moral sustenance, but also in the sense that it is a vision which objectifies and gives urgency to their criticism of the human condition in our time. It is the name of our desire because the desire arises from a conflict with, and an extension from, the world that is; nor could the desire sur-

vive in any meaningful way were it not for this complex relationship to the world that is.

At so late and unhappy a moment, however, can one still specify what the vision of socialism means or should mean? Is the idea of utopia itself still a tolerable one? . . .

Today, in an age of curdled realism, it is necessary to assert the utopian image. But this can be done meaningfully only if it is an image of social striving, tension, conflict; an image of a problem-creating and problem-solving society.

In his “Essay on Man” Ernst Cassirer has written almost all that remains to be said:

A Utopia is not a portrait of the real world, or of the actual political or social order. It exists at no moment of time and at no point in space; it is a “nowhere.” But just such a conception of a nowhere has stood the test and proved its strength in the development of the modern world. It follows from the nature and character of ethical thought that it can never condescend to accept the “given.” The ethical world is never given; it is forever in the making.

Some time ago one could understandably make of Socialism a consoling day-dream. Now, when we live in the shadow of defeat, to retain, to will the image of socialism is a constant struggle for definition, almost an act of pain. But it is the kind of pain that makes creation possible.

Dissent, Spring 1954